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Southern Academic Review

a student journal of scholarship

volume lxvi, number xii
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Selection Editors:
Jasmine Hodges
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Amanda Reid

Dr. Matthew Levey, Faculty Advisor

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Wertmuller's Mannerism

Jackie Alford

Beginning her career as an assistant to Federico Fellini, Lina Wertmuller came into her own during the nineteen seventies. Wertmuller embraced such themes as passion, sex, and politics, branching from Fellini's focus on Fantasy and division from Neorealism. However, in doing so, Wertmuller often equated the three subjects, making sexual performance an indication of political status. Unlike her contemporary Italian post New Wave film directors, Wertmuller's ability to bring seemingly unrelated material together into a cohesive story line connected artistic styles and her chosen themes.

With emphasis on exaggerated attenuation, irrational and ambiguous space, intricate compositions, and bizarre affects of lighting, the Mannerist style in the visual arts was a bridging force between the Late Renaissance period and the Baroque. However, this style had affects farther reaching than the time period it encompassed. The small detail of Agnolo Bronzino's *Venus, Cupid, Folly, and Time* in Lina Wertmuller's 1976 film *Seven Beauties* is an illustration of Wertmuller's own style as a director as well as a visual cue to the viewer to connect the major themes of man's sensitivity to sexual, psychological and moral dilemmas dealt with in the film.

As a bridge between artistic styles, Mannerism allowed artists to draw from the masters of the Renaissance to answer their artistic questions instead of looking to nature for their answers. "One could say that whereas their predecessors sought nature and found their style, the Mannerists looked first for a style and found a manner" (Gardner 763). In this same sense, Wertmuller connected the legacy of Fellini with the new, unexplored areas of film. As Fellini's assistant on his film *8½*, it is understandable for Wertmuller to be easily influenced by him and attribute select characteristics of her style to him. Wertmuller

even goes so far as to incorporate music from Fellini's films into her own. This sort of "homage to predecessors" is directly equated with the Mannerist tendency to plagiarize the work of the Renaissance masters.

The Mannerist tendency to use unusual lighting directly correlates to the scene in which Bronzino's work appears. Upon his entrance, Pasqualino, a prisoner in a German concentration camp, is shown in direct natural light while his female commandant is veiled in a cold blue hue. However, as Pasqualino continues to tell her that he loves her, his lighting changes to the same blue that surrounds the commandant. In this way, Pasqualino is similar to a chameleon, changing his own identity to meet the demanding environment in which he is placed. Feeling that his only chance for survival was through the seduction of the commandant, Pasqualino equated himself with the commandant. The lighting is a direct visual cue to Pasqualino's ability to survive and Wertmuller's issue of surviving despite the ethical and moral consequences.

The hard-hitting commentary by critic Pauline Kael comes to an interesting point when comparing Wertmuller's portrayal of *Seven Beauties* with Mannerism. While Kael

claims that there is no substance behind the interlude with Pasqualino and the commandant since the commandant is not romantically driven by Pasqualino's outward fondness, one might argue that Wertmuller was using the Mannerist tendency to portray a cold atmosphere in scenes of emotion or violence. Pasqualino, desperate for nourishment, brings the emotional tension in the office to a tremendous level. However, it is the commandant's insistent use of the whip and the threat of death if Pasqualino does not perform that the possibility of violence becomes imminent.

The Mannerist tendencies shown through Wertmuller's directorial style in *Seven Beauties* makes it understandable why she chose Bronzino's painting. Bronzino's *Venus, Cupid, Folly, and Time* is also known as *Allegory of Time and Love*. Time uncovers Cupid as he caresses his mother, Venus, while Folly, in the form of a young child, prepares to douse them with pink roses. In the limited background of the painting are the figures of Hatred and Inconsistency. As a whole, the painting is said to represent that Love, with its ever-present paradox Hatred, plagued with inconsistency and its foolishness will be discovered in Time (Gardner 764). Although Wertmuller is not directly dealing with the theme of Love,

she deals with the love of humankind; we see Pasqualino disregard that love again and again for his survival. Time will remember those who died for their freedom from oppression while Time uncovers Pasqualino's inconsistency in life and leaves him alive physically but void of character at the end of the film. The strong eroticism in *Allegory of Time and Love* is portrayed as a moral metaphor of sorts, with the sexual encounters and charming ways of Pasqualino serving as a fully functioning allegory for the moral dilemmas faced in individual survival.

Although Wertmuller trailed the era of Mannerism by over four hundred years, she delved into history to make a connection with modern cinematic viewers. The single painting in the background allows the depth of the film to remain ambiguous; however, it simultaneously gives subtle clues to the viewer as to how far the repercussions of the character's actions will reach, signaling again the use of Mannerism. With one stroke of skillful placement, Wertmuller reveals the moral dilemmas that Pasqualino confronts as well as the motives behind her directorial choices.

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Female Genital Mutilation: Origins, Justifications, and Possible Solutions

Aimee R. Cleckler

FGM is one of the most widespread and most culturally sanctioned human rights abuses in the world.

This paper explores the processes of female circumcision, and its origins. Along with presenting statistical data, this paper also addresses the important topics of cultural justifications of the practice and possible solutions to the problem.

We do not know what it means to a girl or woman when her central organ of sensory pleasure is cut off, when her life-giving canal is stitched up amid blood and fear and secrecy, while she is forcibly held down, and told that if she screams she will cause the death of her mother or bring shame on her family.

- Cathy Joseph

Discrimination against women and girls is present in many different forms throughout the world. Hundreds of cultures, patriarchal and matriarchal, first- or third world, agrarian and technological, have long histories of oppressing their female members. In this age of the "world community" and global concern, there are many international organizations that are working to improve the treatment of women in virtually every society. Some countries have made great strides in assuring the equal treatment of women and girls. Others are more resistant to the idea of female equality. Many times, the strategies of oppression are so ingrained in the cultures in which they are practiced that opposition to their removal is voiced as strongly by the women as by the men. The practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) is a good example.

Although FGM is, without question, a human rights issue, its long history on the African continent and its degree of cultural enmeshment makes it a very difficult practice to change.

Often referred to as female circumcision, FGM is the removal of some or all of the external female genitalia. It is performed on pre-pubescent girls, mostly in rural areas, and without the benefit of anesthesia or hygienic post-surgical treatment. The healing process that incurs is long and extremely painful for the child. Most girls suffer acute health problems as a result of the surgery, and many report substantial long-term complications as well. The tradition has continued throughout the generations for a number of reasons. One is the pervasive cultural justification for the practice that lies within the context of the Islamic faith, even though there is no support for female circumcision in any traditional Islamic text. Because it is widely agreed that FGM violates human rights, dozens of organizations, such as the World Health Organization, Amnesty International, and various grassroots groups, are working toward the eradication of this barbaric practice. In the past

few decades, these groups have been successful in establishing global concern about the practice.

* * *

There are three types of FGM that are widely practiced: *sunna*, *excision*, and *infibulation*. They are defined by the degree of cutting and external organ removal that are involved. *Sunna* is the least physically damaging of all the procedures, requiring the removal of the prepuce (foreskin) of the clitoris. However, in her article "Compassionate Accountability: An Embodied Consideration of Female Genital Mutilation," Cathy Joseph recorded the words of a female Sudanese doctor who told her that "she never saw even one case where the surrounding skin of the clitoris was removed without also damaging the clitoris" (1996). The crudeness of the process renders it a very inexact science. This mildest form of FGM is the only form that can be even remotely compared to male circumcision, which is performed for more legitimate reasons, such as health and sanitation. The intermediate level is known as *excision* or *clitoridectomy*. This procedure involves the removal of the clitoris and the labia minora. Some definitions also claim that part of the labia majora is excised in this type of FGM procedure. The most severe form of FGM is *infibulation*, in which all the external sexual organs are removed and the vulva is sewn together, leaving only a tiny opening for the expulsion of urine and menstrual blood.

All types of circumcision are almost always performed before the onset of puberty. In collecting data for her article, "Circumcision and Health Among Rural Women of Southern Somalia as Part of a Family Life Survey" (1993), D.W. Ntiri found the mean age of circumcision in Somalia to be 6.9 years. The oldest reported age she recorded is fifteen. S.A.A. Abu-Sahlieh reports that in Egypt, girls undergo the surgery at one week or two months of age ("To Mutilate in the Name of Jehovah or Allah: Legitimization of Male and Female Circumcision", 1994). Joseph (1996)

claims that the mutilation is occurring at earlier ages, "presumably because younger girls resist less."

Like the surgery itself, the healing process is extremely painful and usually occurs in unsanitary conditions. Circumcisors have no antibiotics or anesthesia, and the same unsterilized cutting implement is used on all the girls during the ceremony. An example of the healing process employed by some tribes in Southern Somalia is described in this excerpt from an article by Ntiri (1993):

After the operation, the initiate is bound mummy-style for a period of three to five days. Treatment for the suture includes fresh eggs and a mixture of herbs and resin. Smoke heat is applied after the first three days to hasten the healing process.

The lack of mental and emotional preparation that the girls receive before they undergo the procedure and the extreme pain that they endure during and after the surgery often cause severe short-term and long-term complications. Some common short-term physical problems are urine and feces retention, ulceration of the genital region, infections, and hemorrhaging. Most girls suffer from at least some of these immediate problems as a result of unsanitary operating conditions.

For many, the physical and psychological effects of the surgery do not disappear when the wounds heal. "UN Condemns Female Circumcision," an article by Josh Hamilton published in the British Medical Journal in 1997, names the following as the most common long-term complications: urinary incontinence, urinary tract infections, infertility, cysts, abscesses, keloid scarring, and complications during childbirth. Labor complications are more commonly severe in excised and infibulated women. In fact, Joseph (1996) claims that 20 percent of infibulated women die in childbirth. Besides the physical side effects, many women also experience psy-

chosexual problems as a result of circumcision (Abu-Sahlieh, 1994). Dyspareunia, pain during sexual activity that is extreme enough to prevent intercourse, is one such common problem. Many girls also experience acute post-traumatic shock.

Even with the likelihood of the above-mentioned problems, FGM is commonplace in some parts of the world. Despite disputes over exact numbers, the prevalence of these practices in Africa is astonishing. Although FGM is practiced sporadically throughout the world, it is concentrated in Africa, especially in impoverished and Islamic communities. In her book, *Female Genital Mutilation: A Call for Global Action*, Nahid Toubia claims that most African countries have at least a 50 percent occurrence among all female citizens. She writes that FGM is especially common in such countries as Djibouti (98 percent), Ethiopia and Eritrea (90 percent), Sierra Leone (90 percent), Sudan (89 percent), and Somalia (98 percent). The most commonly found estimate of the prevalence of FGM is that 200 million African women are affected at present, and two million more are circumcised every year. Other, more conservative figures estimate 60-80 million women in Africa today (Ntiri, 1993) and 110 million women worldwide in approximately forty countries (Joseph, 1996). Hamilton (1997) writes that there may presently be an African occurrence in excess of 90 percent of the female population. There is an abundance of conflicting statistics from many varied sources. Despite the inconsistencies, there remains an indisputable problem: most African women and girl-children are being negatively affected by a practice that has a very long history and very uncertain origins.

The theories concerning the origins of FGM are as inconclusive as the statistics on its prevalence. Joseph (1996) discusses evidence of excised mummies that date back to the sixteenth century BCE. She also mentions that Herodotus recorded the first written account of a clitoridectomy in the year 450 BCE.

Ntiri (1993) asserts that some scholars place the birth of FGM in the fifth century CE, and that others claim that it originated in 23 BCE in Ethiopia and Egypt. In fact, the Sudanese coined the term "pharaonic" for the harshest form of circumcision because it spread from Egypt to Sudan, although there is no hard-and-fast evidence that Pharaonic Egyptians employed the practice (Ntiri, 1993).

There is, therefore, little question that the practice predates the founding of Islam. Strangely enough, the perpetuation of the practice owes a great deal to the teachings of Islamic holy men. In an interview with Pratibha Parmar (Walker & Parmar, *Warrior Marks*, 1993), male Islamic scholar Baba Lee states that, although there is absolutely no support for the practice in the Koran, FGM is "psychologically imposed on women by some scholars." This seems to be a predominantly Afro-Islamic phenomenon. Joseph (1996) writes that most of the African populations where FGM is routinely practiced are Islamic, while 80 percent of the Arab world does not circumcise its female members. It is likely that the proximity and influence of early circumcising Egyptian cultures on African society is the reason that many more African Muslims practice FGM today than their Muslim counterparts in the Middle East.

For centuries in some parts of Africa, African Muslim leaders have justified FGM as conforming to "*Sunnah*," the tradition of Muhammad, which explicitly requires the circumcision of Islamic males. Female circumcision is therefore only inferred by scholars, but not explicitly stated in the Koran. Those whose interest lies in the perpetuation of the practice attempt to justify it by drawing similarities between FGM and male circumcision, which is currently accepted as the norm in most of the world's cultures. Abu-Sahlieh (1994) writes that "there is no similarity between male circumcision, a prophylactic measure recommended for boys in almost every society and female circumcision, the goal of which is to

diminish, if not suppress, sexual desire in women."

Many African Muslims are of the Sunni denomination of Islam, which requires strict segregation and differentiation of the sexes and relegates women to a purely "domestic and maternal" status (Ntiri, 1993). A woman's sexual desires are seen as dangerous and as a possible source of trouble and suffering. By removing the clitoris, FGM intends to reduce a woman's capacity for sexual pleasure in order to make her a more faithful and pure wife. The main Islamic arguments in favor of female circumcision are to maintain cleanliness, prevent diseases, to bring calm and give radiance to the face, to keep the couple together, and to prevent (the woman) from falling into what is forbidden (Abu-Sahlieh, 1994). The scholar Baba Lee disregards these longstanding justifications, saying, "(FGM) is just a matter of propaganda, which people are spreading because they want circumcision taken up more and more. But it is not Islamic. It is not religious. It is not obligatory. It is not *Sunnah*. It's a tradition" (Walker & Parmar, 1993).

And it is a tradition with strong roots in generations of Muslim families. In African Islamic tradition, if a woman is not excised she is not clean, and the unclean are not welcome to pray and worship with others. In short, they are not acting as proper Muslims, and are therefore marginalized in their society. FGM has become, through misinterpretation and misogynistic Islamic principles, a religious necessity for millions of African women. In 1984, the Inter-African Committee released a statement that said, in part, "An erroneous idea of Religion has played a key role in maintaining the practice of excision... which tend(s) to relegate the woman to a lower status in relation to the man" (Abu-Sahlieh, 1994). Religious ideology and male-domination are obviously recognized as playing major roles in the continuation of FGM. However, there are many areas in Africa where FGM is practiced

and Islam has never been, like the Kikuyu culture in Kenya. (Leon Spencer, personal communication, November 28, 1998). Although there seem to be some direct links between religion and cultural practice in this instance, there are certainly regions where the Islamic factor is irrelevant.

There are many other cultural reasons that female circumcision is still such an intricate part of African society. If the list of harmful effects is so extensive, why do parents, and especially mothers, continue to enforce these traditional practices? Perhaps one of the most prevalent and persuasive arguments favoring the continuation of female circumcision lies in the question itself. The centuries of colonization of Africa have left many of its communities resenting and resisting the Westernization or eradication of their traditions and cultures. In fact, according to Lori Leonard, author of "Female Circumcision in Southern Chad: Origins, Meaning, and Current Practice" (1996), the evolution of the movement against FGM has been closely linked with the work of Christian missionaries in Africa. In response, many have dug more deeply into their traditional ways in order to establish some measure of safety and protection from the outside world. Somalia, for example, has expressed great offense at Western efforts to curb infibulation (Ntiri, 1993).

Leon Spencer, director of the Washington Office on Africa, suggests that the preservation of FGM itself may be less important to Africans than the preservation of their traditional customs. In African societies, customs are viewed as "part of an entire community fabric", consisting of such strongholds as the differentiation of age groups and of gender roles, which are at least partially fulfilled by the tradition of circumcision (personal communication, November 28, 1998). Leonard (1996) found that 80 percent of women who favored the continuation of the practice did so because it was tradition. Their grandmothers and great-grandmothers had had it done,

and had supported the circumcision of all the other girl children in the community. Mary, one of the mothers interviewed by author and activist Alice Walker for her book *Warrior Marks* (1993), said "Our great-great-grandparents used to do it, and we don't know the reason why, or why we are still doing it and will continue to do it." None of the women interviewed by Leonard or Walker were aware of the origins of FGM or could offer any other explanation for the tradition.

One of the simplest and most powerful reasons for the unquestioning obedience to the practice is the desire to be like the other members of the society, to add to the "community fabric". In the communities where FGM is practiced, it is a cultural expectation that every female will undergo the procedure, which is viewed as a female rite of passage. This rite of passage involves the circumcision and then a period of time during which the girls are separated from the tribe and are instructed in their duties as female members of the society. The surgery, healing, and training process is akin to the circumcision and rites of passage forced upon the males of these same tribes.

As a result of this tradition, women often feel more a part of the community after they are circumcised. They have been through the secret ritual that all the other women have undergone, and they feel proud and grown-up. Many groups perform the ritual in an atmosphere of celebration and festivity. Leonard (1996) recorded the positive feelings that one woman expressed about the practice: "After circumcision, you learn to sing and dance...After, you feel like a big woman and people respect you." FGM is so deeply rooted in some cultures that it is hard for their members to fathom the idea that most of the world's women are uncircumcised. In Somalia, for example, women that are uncircumcised are ridiculed and labeled unfit for marriage (Ntiri, 1993). Certain types of FGM can provide proof that a woman's chastity is intact, thereby mak-

ing her more desirable to potential husbands.

Herein lies another reason for the perpetuation of the practice: economics. A chaste daughter can reap a higher dowry; she is essentially more valuable in the marriage market. Circumcision is also economically important to the women who perform the surgery. For many of these women, their work may be the only source of income for their families, so they are very interested in its continuation (Abu-Sahlieh, 1994). The financial support and the respect that circumcisors receive from their communities are other reasons that they offer some of the most outspoken resistance to changes in the status quo.

Traditions within the native communities that practice FGM are also reinforced by the presence of superstitious tales that reinforce fear and loathing of the female form and sexuality. The natural state of the external female genitalia is considered unsightly. Many of the stories that are passed down through generations of women are based on erroneous medical information. One African woman claimed "everyone knew that if a woman was not circumcised, her unclean parts would grow so long they'd touch her thighs" (Walker & Parmar, 1993). It is also widely believed that FGM prevents disease. If anything, it is clear that it does more to encourage illnesses and the spread of infectious diseases. Many who support the practice also claim that it increases fertility (Ntiri, 1993). In fact, in many cases of excision and infibulation, it makes sexual intercourse so painful that penetration is impossible.

Many interpretations of why circumcision has such a long history in Africa are based on ideas of male domination and intent to control the sexuality of women. Some claim that FGM is "'an expression of male power', 'a demonic desire to control female sexuality, an endless tyranny of the dominating male behind the alibi of culture'," or "part of an immense conspiracy aimed at subjecting (women) to male domination" (Abu-

Sahlieh, 1994). These claims, although dramatic, are not entirely implausible. The male-dominated Islamic religion that controls many parts of African society is a strong influence on the continuation of these traditions and customs. However, some present-day Islamic scholars recognize the need for the leaders of this male-dominated religion to speak out in favor of the rights of Islamic women, instead of continuing to control their sexuality and reproductive capacities through a tradition that is not and never was supported by Islamic teachings. Although both women and men support the continuation of FGM, the patriarchal religious and governmental institutions have not done enough to show their support for the abolition of female circumcision.

The abuse imposed on African women through forced circumcision constitutes violations of their human rights for a number of reasons. According to Parmar (Walker & Parmar, 1993), circumcised girls “lose the ability to control their own sexuality.” They are deprived of their healthy female organs without being able to give their consent. There is injustice in not informing women about the painful and life-altering procedure that their society requires them to undergo. It is also a human rights issue because excision or infibulation can later affect the lives of a woman and her unborn children through complications during labor or delivery. Among the many other physical problems that circumcised girls often have to endure, there is the possibility that the circumcision process is helping to spread AIDS, which is already prevalent on the African continent (Walker & Parmar, 1993). The circumcisor uses the same knife or other cutting instrument on all the girls that she circumcises. The AIDS virus can be passed from girl to girl, or from circumcisor to girl, since the use of sterilized materials is all but nonexistent, especially in rural areas.

When one considers the extent of the health problems associated with FGM and the growing world focus on human rights issues

surrounding circumcision, it is no surprise that an international fight against FGM has developed. Westerners became aware of FGM through African hospitals established by Protestant and Catholic missionaries. Besides western religious organizations, the most opposition to FGM has come from the medical profession and world health and human rights organizations. The World Health Organization and Amnesty International have been two of the most involved and influential international forces in the worldwide campaign to end female circumcision. There are also a number of grassroots human rights organizations that have long histories of working against FGM. Some of the most active are the Research Action Information Network for Bodily Integrity of Women (RAINBO), Equality Now, Minority Rights Group, and Forward International.

In 1958, the WHO claimed that “the ritual practices in question, resulting from social and cultural conceptions, are not within the WHO’s jurisdiction” (Abu-Sahlieh, 1994). By 1978, they had changed their stance and organized the first international convention on FGM. By 1982, they recognized excision as a human rights issue and made an official declaration to the United Nation’s Committee on Human Rights (Abu-Sahlieh, 1994). In April 1997, leaders of WHO, UNICEF, and the UN Population Fund announced plans to eradicate FGM within three generations (Hamilton, 1997).

Amnesty International, which has announced plans to eradicate or drastically reduce FGM by the year 2005, developed a ten-point program of action in 1997 which is heavily focused on the need for governmental initiative (Female Genital Mutilation: A Human Rights Information Pack, at <http://www.amnesty.org>). Many of the leaders of governments and of rural communities are still among the stumbling blocks to progress. Government officials, uneager to buck the patriarchal system, will often feign support for the

eradication of FGM, but will allocate no money to insure that anything is done (Ntiri, 1993). Amnesty is quick to point out that national and international non-government organizations (NGO's) are responsible for much of the progress made in the fight against FGM. They have brought the topic to the forefront and have succeeded in forcing African governments to face the negative consequences that result from the practice. The governments of several African countries, such as Senegal, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, and *Cote d'Ivoire*, have passed legislation since 1995 specifically banning FGM (Hamilton, 1997; Crossette, *New York Times*, 1999). According to Toubia (1995), these are countries in which only half to two-thirds of the female population is affected. Nonetheless, the progress that the legislation demonstrates is real and important. In Sudan, which is thought to be one of the countries in which FGM is most prevalent, the government has prohibited infibulation. *Sunnah* circumcision, however, is still legal (Toubia, 1995).

Many well-educated African urbanites, removed by a generation or more from the direct influence of their relatives in rural communities, are deciding not to circumcise their daughters in the traditional manner. Usually of the professional class, these parents are concerned with the pain that the circumcisions cause. While some are rejecting circumcision altogether, others are choosing to have their daughters circumcised in approved medical facilities, where there is access to anesthesia and antibiotics (Ntiri, 1993). This choice, however, fails to address the real issue concerning the violation of the rights of the child.

Encouraging parents to obtain less severe and traumatic forms of FGM from trained medical practitioners has only served to "legitimize and perpetuate" the practice. The WHO has spoken strongly against the medicalization of FGM (<http://www.amnesty.org>), because they see that, in this instance, their well-intentioned activism

has backfired. Another unfortunate and unintended result of international health sector movements has been to further threaten the valued traditions of African nationals, thereby encouraging an increase in the occurrence of FGM. Ntiri (1993) believes that even some Christian Africans are undergoing the surgery out of a sense of kinship with their Islamic sisters.

What is the best way to address the issue of eradicating FGM without assuming an invasive and insensitive posture? Since African resistance to outside influence is well established, most of the change must come from inside Africa. Dr. Felicia Jegede of Nigeria, who specializes in community health, preventative medicine, and childcare, spoke at the 1995 Female Genital Excision Seminar in Queensland. In her address at the seminar, she pointed out that, "No-one should be allowed to handle such issues as this if they have not had time to look at the African cultures, their way of life, their world views." Groups of white, uncircumcised Western women preaching to impoverished, Islamic farmers' wives on the benefits of retaining an intact clitoris would probably not produce very successful results. Much more could be accomplished if the influence is primarily African and female.

The past few decades of trial-and-error campaigns conducted by various anti-FGM groups have offered some ideas about what the most successful strategies might be.

One solution would be to get Muslim religious leaders to set the record straight on the non-connection between Islam and female circumcision. Also, African females need more representation in government in order to pass the laws they need to protect their bodies and the bodies of their daughters. Another idea is to employ women from grassroots organizations to offer non-forceful education to African women in the rural areas where FGM is most widely practiced. Offering information on alternatives, or at least making it clear that there can be a *choice*, would begin to open commu-

nities of women to healthier and more productive options concerning FGM. The banning of FGM by the Senegalese Parliament in January of 1999 came about through such an educational program. *Tofhan* ("breakthrough"), a Senegalese women's organization, had been working at the grassroots level offering literacy classes and information on human rights. Rana Badri of Equality Now stresses that the workers "didn't ask the community to stop the practice. This came as a result of the women's awareness of their rights" (Crossette, 1999). Her comments and *Tofhan's* success offer strong support for educational programs that target groups where the practice of mutilation is prevalent.

The cultural pressure within communities, and the sense of belonging that FGM provides to some women, would be the most difficult aspects of the problem to change. Leonard (1996) states that "The challenge...is to identify suitable alternatives to circumcision which facilitate the transmission of group values without compromising women's health and well-being." The greatest solutions incorporate information on health benefits and communicate sensitivity toward the preservation of the ideals behind a culture's traditional practices. Rite of passage ceremonies and traditions are common to all cultures. Perhaps the adoption of harmless rituals that invoke the same spirit of acceptance and belonging would be able to replace the current harmful practices.

Another aspect of the movement to consider is the time frame that many organizations are putting on their progress. Dr. Jegede (1995) feels that the amount of time that activist groups have allocated for the eradication of FGM is entirely unrealistic. When she said: "The time we are looking at for changes to occur in this problem are too short. We should be talking about generations because it took that long to establish the practices," she was expressing a very realistic attitude. She is strongly supportive of the work against FGM,

but feels that most activists' expectations will not materialize in our lifetime.

* * *

The brute violation of the physical integrity of healthy, growing girls is what makes this particular practice a target for criticism. It is an act that presents such a disturbing mental image, partly because it involves children, and partly because it violates such a private and sensitive part of a young person: the development of one's sexuality. Female circumcision is not an issue that should be discussed just among women and girls. It is an issue with which every person in the world should be concerned, because it violates inherent human rights that should be respected by all people. The essence of the struggle against FGM, indeed any struggle to protect the rights of another human being, revolves around the respect to which every person is entitled. This is one reason why the campaigns against FGM present such difficult questions: there must also be respect for the culture that has perpetrated the abuse. The victim, although the most important part, is only a small piece of the equation. The true test of the international fight against FGM now lies in its ability to treat the culture that has fostered such abuse with the same respect as the girls who will suffer for reasons that they will never be able to sufficiently explain.

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Growth and Exploitation: Trends of Chiapan Economic History

Bradley Camp Davis

On the first of January, 1994, a group of rebels under the name Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional conducted an insurrection in several villages in the Chiapas region of Southeastern Mexico. Behind this insurgency exists a record of exploitation and economic disturbance of Chiapas beginning with its conquest by Spain in the 16th century and extending through to the present economic policies of the post-NAFTA Mexican federal government.

By examining the development of the region in terms of the establishment and perversion of commercial trade patterns, the disruption of traditional industries, and a drastic overexploitation of its natural resources; the economic history of Chiapas becomes a story of a people often dominated yet refusing defeat.

Historical events of an enormous scale often have effects that, rather than wane or diminish, appear throughout the further course of history. Complex, pervasive, and extending; those effects, the evidence of powerful events, operate at levels far deeper than those which lend themselves to casual observation. Gaining an understanding of historical relationships, a sense of the complex causality that brings the past into immediacy, demands an exploration of the extension of events over a broad and documented period of time. The elements behind the rebellion in the Southeastern Mexican State of Chiapas require such an exploration. By examining the history of the region through a record of economic change and its pervasive social effects, the contemporary Chiapan situation becomes clarified as emergent, a result of economic trends. Beginning with the changes wrought by Spanish colonization, Chiapas experienced a manipulation and perversion of economic patterns, the legacy of which extended

through Mexican independence, attempts at agrarian reform, campaigns of privatization, and a systematic restructuring of the entire Mexican economy to satisfy the commercial demands of unrestricted trade. During these historical events, covering pre-colonization, colonial rule, integration into a national economy, and the rebellion of four years ago; Chiapas has undergone economic alterations that have produced identifiable social conditions. The social condition of the region is more fully understood once the economic legacy of Chiapas is placed within the context of Mexican history and analyzed with respect to development and stagnation.

The modern State of Chiapas contains peoples of varying ethnicity, all of which descended from the ancient Maya civilization. Within the region, ethnic groups settled either in highlands or in the Grijalva Valley. For the first several centuries of the Common Era, the Chiapan people engaged in violent warfare with other cultures, especially with the Zoque

of the Grijalva Valley (Wasserstrom 9).

By 900 CE, the Chiapanecos had established political hegemony over the other ethnic groups and, much like the Inca of Peru, spread their language and culture throughout the region. Although the Chiapaneco language, Tzotzil, grew in usage among peoples conquered or subjected by the Chiapan people, other languages and cultures maintained their integrity, including Tzeltal, Chol, and Tojolabal (Collier 20).

The development of an identifiable system of subsistence and trade appeared with the dominance of the city of Zinacantan in the 14th century (Wasserstrom 10). Prior to the advent of the Zinacantecos, peoples of the Chiapas region engaged in subsistence production with limited prospects for commerce. Either practicing nomadic patterns of harvesting or, in the words of economic historian Enrique Semo, "sedentary agriculture," (Semo 2) there remained little, if any, product to bring to a commercial market. After Zinacantan established a sort of commercial hegemony over the region, the forces of production consolidated and could allow for tradable goods.

Surplus maize and surplus beans changed from goods of storage to goods of trade. Though Zinacantan and the entire region remained engaged in subsistence economics (although commerce was possible it never altered the orientation of Chiapan agricultural production), what surplus occurred permitted an exchange for certain goods on a market system. Predominately, Zinacantecos traded for goods of ceremonial importance with such groups as the Aztecs. Offering their surplus agricultural products, they would acquire finished goods crafted of gold and liquors that could be used in religious festivals and ceremonies (Vogt 57-58). This interaction of the Zinacantecos with other cultures established the earliest pattern of Chiapan trade: raw materials for finished goods.

As documented by Evon Vogt, a cultural anthropologist and founder of the Harvard Chiapas Project in the 1960s, this early economic orientation directly affected the culture of Zinacantan. By examining current religious practices, which Vogt links to pre-Columbian ceremonies, he determined that Zinacantecos bound themselves to the land, as they relied on the land not only for survival but also for commercial growth. Religion reflects this relationship. Zinacantecos believe their fates to be intertwined with "animal spirit companions" to whom they paid homage in order to ensure the productivity of their land and, ultimately, to ascertain "continuing survival" (Vogt 12). Commercial and economic developments affected social conditions by emphasizing reliance on land, an emphasis that the ritual and underlying myths of Zinacanteco religion demonstrate, according to Vogt.

Though compelling, Vogt's evidence of contemporary religion reflecting pre-Columbian commercial development requires a caveat. Studies conducted by cultural anthropologists, though exhaustive in field research and articulate in their conclusions, nonetheless present difficulties. Vogt's observations rely on 20th century evidence. Though he believes such evidence to be purely indicative of "a social system with deep roots in the Mayan past," (Vogt 13) no one can accept them with full veracity without ignoring the legacy of historical events. During colonization, Mexican Federal consolidation, and state-directed economic production the social structure of Chiapas changed in patterns traceable through an analysis of economic relationships. Vogt's assumption is that Chiapan culture regards the last five hundred years of history, though he concedes acculturation, with ambivalence.

Excepting the effects of acculturation, which will be examined, any idea of a pure native culture existing in Chiapas, even one

acting as subtext for the daily activities of the population, has no grounding in historical perspective, economic or otherwise. As will become very evident, the economic changes in Chiapas have been concentrated into spurts of time. Especially during the colonial period and in the late 20th century, this pattern produced effects so drastic that Chiapan culture could not completely reflect pure native culture, Vogt's "deep roots" notwithstanding. Support for this perspective can be found in Robert Wasserstrom's 1983 work: *Class and Society in Central Chiapas*. As Wasserstrom argues, the claims of cultural anthropology, no matter how attractive, must be evaluated with respect to the drastic effects of the commercial growth and economic exploitation of Chiapas (Wasserstrom 240).

Growth and exploitation arrived on an unprecedented level in 1528, with the entry of Diego de Mazariegos (a commissioned conquistador) into Southeastern Mexico. Wrestling control from both Zinacantan and the city of Chiapas, which retained political importance after the rise of the Zinacantecos, Mazariegos established Spanish dominance over the entire Chiapas region, from the present-day State of Chiapas into the North-western section of Guatemala. Spanish presence in the region affected Chiapas on many levels, including the nominal and administrative inclusion of its land and people into "New Spain." In addition to the founding of a new political hegemony, Spanish conquistadores ushered in a new era of socioeconomic change to the region; an era steeped in the prospects for growth and yielding disturbance and exploitation upon pre-existing patterns and markets. The socioeconomic aspect of the Spanish dominion in Chiapas would prove to have dire and farthest-reaching consequences.

Following Mazariegos' push into the area, *encomenderos*, the entrepreneurial indi-

viduals sent by the Spanish Crown to guard the integrity of the Catholic faith and (more importantly) develop native resources for the mother country, established a solid presence in Chiapas. Spain's development officers ushered in important changes to traditional economic patterns, not only taking advantage of the system but also altering the system by re-orienting it.

Chiapas possessed a natural supply of sugar that, at the time of the *encomenderos*, would have proved profitable to developers having the resource of exploitable labor at their disposal. Despite this natural resource, the earliest economic role of the Spanish in Chiapas constituted a policy of non-development: they simply reaped profits from established local trade patterns (Wasserstrom 12). *Encomenderos* amassed reserves of capital, a sizeable portion of which they paid to Seville. This accumulation, though resulting from a system of profit that did not seek to alter modes of production, would prove to have extensive effects on Chiapan communities.

By extracting capital from established markets, the Spanish *encomendero* introduced "the primitive accumulation of capital," a process that would transform the economic face of Chiapas (Semo 90-91). Also, Spanish manipulation of the economic structure resulted in the transformation of labor-for-living into labor-for-profit (namely, the profit of the *encomendero*). Labor developed into a commodity under the guidance of Spanish development. The consequences of this event extended deeply, ultimately producing a relation of dependence. As discussed by Marxian economists, drawing from *Das Kapital*, Marx's concentrated study of the capitalist mode of production, "the mechanism of the accumulation process itself not only increases the amount of capital but also the mass of the laboring poor" (Marx 765). Thus initial accu-

mulation *relies* upon an expansion of the commodification of labor. As Spanish colonizers increased the store of capital extracted from native markets, the commodification of labor expanded to include the mass of Chiapans and, within forty years of Mazariegos' arrival, decimated the population.

In order to facilitate a sort of pre-capitalist growth, once the supply of capital available from traditional trade relationships diminished, Spanish officials began attempts to reorient the Chiapan economy. In 1565, all but fifty inhabitants of the village of Zinacantan perished from *peste* or plague. The emergence of this outbreak coincided with the forced relocation of "milpas," tracts of land reserved for the cultivation of corn. By mandating the moving of milpas, Spanish colonizers sought to create fertile areas for "estancias de ganado," or cattle ranches (Wasserstrom 6). Forcing Zinacantecos to relocate their corn-fields to the edges of mountainous regions, rather than in the level areas in which corn grew bountifully, caused a reduction in their food supply, leading to a malnourished population unable to ward off disease. The people suffered enormously. As Wasserstrom cites in his study, the native population in Chiapas declined from 114,400 to 74,990 during the century of cattle ranch growth alone (approximately from 1560s to 1660s) (37). Compounding the threat posed by European diseases such as smallpox and the bubonic plague with the restructuring of a land-based economy produced a tragic situation for the peoples of the region.

Against such a backdrop of economic disruption and its accompanying social tensions, the nature of religious life during the period of colonial rule in Chiapas reflects frustrations among a shaken people. Acculturation, or the synthesis of pre-Columbian customs with European religious teachings, occurred among Chiapans; but it also communicates the historical legacy of the area. Rather than merely occupying ceremonial importance

to religious life, festivals such as the Feast of Carnival and the Tzotzil Festival of the Black-man functioned on the deeper level of social commentary.

The Feast of Carnival, comparable to Mardi Gras in Catholic culture, emerged within the first two centuries of colonial rule. During the period of the festival, which precedes Lent, adult males costume themselves as monkeys and exorcise their inhibitions. What begins as a fiesta develops into a frantic release after the first few days, as even accepted moral norms are suspended to allow for the freest possible expressions of desire and, in some cases, marital infidelity (Bricker 126). The Feast operates as an emotional catharsis for male Chiapans, who celebrate outside of the restrictions of Spanish spirituality.

A more complex, more forceful example of Chiapan culture's ability to modify Catholic religious festivals, an example that more accurately reflects the legacy of colonial events on Chiapan society, is the Festival of the Black-man. One month after Lent, the festival begins. Members of the village community dress as "ladinos," the Tzotzil term for European settlers. They engage in a dramatic presentation of the victory of the ladinos over the invading Moors, a historical reference to the unification of Spain (a story no doubt recounted by Catholic missionaries). Rather than relay Spanish history, Chiapans combine elements of their own experience with the tales of the Europeans, crafting a unique narrative expressed through the Festival (Bricker 129). The "Black-man," a historical reference to the Moors, also represents the invading ladinos and, especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the French. The Black-man is presented with a sinister flavor, a character posing a grave threat to the village. As the other actors defeat the rogue, who is dressed to superficially resemble a Turk, the resilience of Tzotzil culture is proclaimed and the village is saved from invasion. Viewing this ceremony

with an understanding of the region's historical experience, this case of acculturated ritual does not simply reflect an application of Catholic culture (nor does it merely provide a clear window to pre-Columbian traditions); it signifies an attempt to use the culture of the invader as a record. Ultimately, the preservation of the events affecting Chiapan society through such festivals ensures the historical memory of the region's people.

With the collapse of Spanish colonial rule in the early 19th century, Chiapas experienced little qualitative change in its condition. Also, as early as 1838, the native labor exploitable through traditional channels (i.e. the Spanish use of traditional systems for their own benefit) became exhausted and the haciendas, estates governed by landowners, began to recruit labor away from centers such as Zinacantan. As Wasserstrom observes, between the years 1838 and 1875, 50 percent of Zinacantecos left their lands to work on "fincas" in the Grijalva Valley, effectively returning to the lands from which they had been expelled a full century before (135). Though in many cases the lands may have been those held by their ancestors, Spanish development had transformed them from subsistence farms into vassals of profit concerned with the production of trade goods. Had it not been for the displacement of agricultural lands in Chiapas, an event precipitated by Spanish manipulation of and interference in established patterns of production and commerce, such a transformation could not have occurred in such a drastic and concentrated fashion.

The peoples of Chiapas continued to exist as tenant farmers, albeit tenants of their original lands, throughout the early 20th century. In fact, once the situation is assessed in terms of the entire country, Chiapas became "almost an internal colony for Mexico" (Collier 16). Before charting the implications of such a statement, a discussion would serve well of Chiapas to determine the degree of represen-

tation in the region for the national situation. How did Chiapas reflect national conditions before the 1917 Constitution?

Statistics concerning Chiapas before the Mexican Revolution not only reflect but magnify the national trends. Nationwide, fewer than 5 percent of the population owned the entirety of the arable land in 1910, and over 80 percent of all Mexican citizens were illiterate (Quirk 2-5). As the 1917 government proceeded to cope with such desperate conditions, Chiapas often received little benefit from its policies.

Specific to Chiapas, such social problems as illiteracy were exacerbated by the lack of fundamental education in the region and the fact that Spanish, the standard by which literacy is determined, was not the primary language. Chiapas, wherein the majority of the population spoke Tzotzil, was largely a "preliterate" rural society. The amount of "illiteracy" noted by the data simply demonstrates the lack of social opportunity, the lack of possible entries into the world of the Spanish-speaking, ladino landowners (Simpson 243).

Those ladino landowners, parodied in the character of the "Black-man," controlled the vast majority of arable land in Chiapas. Even after the 1917 Revolution, with the Morelos Zapatistas calling for "land for the land-less," the redistribution of property amounted to 98,888 hectares being distributed to 10,027 persons. This rate of 10 hectares per individual was the lowest in post-Revolutionary Mexico, and much of the land the peasants later sold back to the haciendas (Simpson 610). By 1930, on the eve of ejido reform, 19.1 percent of total lands in Chiapas were utilized as pasture (600). With 9 percent lying fallow and a mere 2.4 percent cultivated for agricultural purposes, the effects of Spanish (and later hacienda) manipulation of the agrarian economy are evident. Interference and abuse of the native system had produced a wealthy

class of landowners that developed farmland for cattle, a commodity far more valuable to the market than corn, but which allowed the subsistence practices of Chiapans to wither away. The second colonization of Chiapas had been completed.

The next significant shock to the Chiapan economy arrived with the introduction of the Agrarian Reform Laws in 1933. Though intended to promote the redistribution of wealth and economic participation, the reforms yielded unexpected social results. After seventeen years of reform, after the attempted establishment of "ejido lands" by the Federal Government, Chiapas remained in a situation that resembled 1910 rather than anything more balanced, regulated, or subsistence-oriented.

How could the establishment of ejidos, lands "donated" by wealthy landowners to village committees ostensibly to promote a greater distribution of resources, lead many economic and social historians to the conclusion that they "slashed a deep wound into the social structure of many villages that has not healed?" (Belshaw 265) Explanations for this social damage resided in the economic policies enacted according to the 1933 laws.

Article 27 of the Agrarian Reform Law, incorporated into the Federal Constitution, stated:

In the nation is vested direct ownership of all minerals or substances which in veins, layers, masses, or beds constitute deposits whose nature is different from the components of the land. Private property shall not be expropriated except for reasons of public utility (Simpson 750).

Followed by the provisions of Title IV, of more importance fifty years later: "Commercial stock companies shall not acquire, hold, or administer rural properties" (Simpson 751). Article 27 essentially provided for the nationalization of mineral wealth, but only for reasons of "public utility." By safeguarding mineral

wealth with the category of federal property, the development of resources across the country could be assured. The measures resulting from the 1933 reforms passed with the full force and intent of improving conditions in areas of the country that lacked significant public utility technology such as running water or electricity.

Title IV, the second aspect of the reforms, had a singular purpose: the insulation and defense of native (Mexican) resources in the countryside from exploitation by foreign and commercial interests. The use of the phrase "commercial stock companies" indicates a defense of the now consolidated Mexican economy from foreign intrusion. Its authors intended Title IV to assuage the worries of landowners who feared federal commandeering of their holdings (either for the purpose of industrial development or to generate revenues by selling them to foreign corporations). The statement of Title IV and its implications would translate into a looming irony for Mexico in the early 1990s.

Immediately after the passing of reforms, the effects of ejidos manifested themselves in the Chiapan countryside. A full 13.6 percent of landholdings underwent a change of ownership, with 49.2% of those lands able to produce subsistence crops (Simpson 614). In a region where the impact of cattle ranching had greatly decimated traditional agricultural patterns, placing a large amount of lands into the possession of farmers collectively organized caused much initial enthusiasm among peasants. In 1933, the year of the Reforms, three million hectares of land had the classification "National," signifying ejido holdings, compared with only 524,000 ten years earlier.

Why would such a plain increase in the distribution of property and the establishment of "public" lands result in a "deep wound" in Chiapan society? Why would ejidos, in a process that matured in the 1950s and carried over

to the 1980s, depreciate the situation of the Chiapan peasant? The relationship between the cattle ranchers and the agricultural sector offers a window into the source of economic malaise and its consequential social deterioration.

As described earlier, peasant farmers had long ago been pushed to the periphery of cultivatable lands by the expanding Spanish cattle industry. By creating ejido farms, large collective bodies as opposed to small, scattered independent lands, the federal government not only consolidated agriculture, it stabilized it. Ranchers in the Grijalva Valley, using their accumulated capital to increase livestock holdings and expand commerce as the ejidos provided stable sources of feed and grazing land (for which there appears to have been an insatiable need); those ranchers truly benefited from the ejido reforms (Wasserstrom 214-217). Their benefit sent Chiapas into retrogression. Rather than promote equality and solidify de-stratification, the reforms best served the interests of ranch proprietors and produced no significant change in the economic life of the region.

Two other significant developments occurred in the aftermath of ejido reform that demonstrated the adaptability of Chiapan peasants as well as the further course of government-determined economic programs. The course of federal development resulted in the realization of the region's role as an "internal colony," and one with its own system of internal commerce.

In order to promote the maturation of national industry, the federal government employed low price incentives to encourage the use of hydroelectric power. This program, complete by 1959, amounted to the wholesale funding of the industrial sector by the countryside, as Chiapas produces most of the hydroelectric power in Mexico (Glade 81). With a mere 3 percent of the country's population, the region produces 54 percent of Mexico's hy-

droelectric power, while nearly 50 percent of Chiapas has no electricity. In a nation wherein 45 percent of the general population has television and 67 percent have running water, the force of Chiapas' disparity is striking (Collier 18-19). Through state-directed industrial development, the Chiapan hydroelectric industry matured, but only in a subservient and mercantilistic fashion.

Because of this uneven growth, the local commerce adopted a pragmatic nature. A system of informal loans, a non-institutional transference of finance capital emerged in the rural Chiapas region (Vogt 60; Belshaw 179). Within this system, peasants contracted agreements with family or friends for no-interest, short-term loans. Informal contracts were drawn during a social ritual involving rum. After consuming a bottle of rum, the visiting peasant would proposition his friend or family member for a loan. If his host granted the request, the loan-seeking peasant would offer a bottle of rum for every hundred pesos loaned (Vogt 60-63). Through this system, peasants could acquire capital for the purchase of various farm materials. Chiapan society provided for its members where the Mexican government failed.

Having suffered the effects of colonialism, the cattle ranchers, and attempts at reform that only served to handicap its economic structure; Chiapas next faced the wrath of Mexico's orientation northward. Rooted in a quest to satisfy markets of countries such as the United States, Mexico's first concerted effort involved a building-up of its oil industry, during which hydroelectric power was employed for industrialization. The use of this power source, chiefly provided by Chiapas, increased the disproportionate allocation of resources already documented in the proceeding paragraphs. The next period of growth and exploitation constitutes Mexico's efforts to bring itself into the fold of "free trade."

Mexico's reasons for desiring a rela-

tionship with the United States based on free trade have an explanation in the language of economics and warrant a brief description. In the 1960s, to overcome stagnation, President Luis Echeverría proposed a federal policy of "shared development," a solution that would promote agricultural growth while not diminishing industrial progress (Teichman 37). By 1976, the private business sector revolted, resorting to capital flight to protect their revenues from being destroyed by currency devaluation (Lustig 19). The moneyed class feared devaluation because of the international climate: if Echeverría's policies resulted in a halt to rural exploitation, the international community would perceive that action as a threat to any possible future investment in the Mexican economy. With no foreign capital, the private sector believed Mexico would have no option other than the devaluation of the peso, a measure that would severely reduce the value of *their* financial holdings. Mexico entered the 1980s with a nervous, investment-hungry private sector.

In addition to a nervous private sector, a malaise originated in the international coffee market, directly disturbing the Chiapan economy. In 1980, coffee workers organized a strike in the village of Simojovel. Their demands for improvements in wages and working conditions were disappointed, though, due to the lack of formal wage relations between employees and employers (Foweraker 186). Essentially, coffee workers in Chiapas operated under the hacienda system; they were tenants of the land possessing no ability to unionize or press for improvements. As Mexico moved into the 1980s, coffee prices dropped on the international market. The fall in prices further hampered the plight of coffee workers, who saw whatever leverage they might gain in labor disputes fall away in the face of sinking commodity values (Teichman 182).

The plummeting of international cof-

fee prices coincided with a process of divestiture implemented by Salinas. Following Mexico's default on International Monetary Fund monies, monies acquired for the purpose of constructing an oil industry for the American market, Salinas agreed to reduce public investment in the private sector to 5.1 percent of the GDP (Teichman 83). His action, directly in line with IMF demands, proved detrimental for Chiapas. After the elimination of subsidies for the agricultural sector, Chiapas experienced a drastic increase in poverty, as the lone protection for Chiapas' coffee industry disappeared (Lustig 218). Agricultural deregulation meant investments rather than subsidies and enormously affected food markets. As prices were liberalized and government support removed, Chiapan poverty exploded; planting the seeds of tension brought to maturation during the events of the 1990s (OECD 162).

This social tension manifested itself in the 1994 political uprising in Chiapas and had as its final contributor the particular requirements of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Two specific demands of NAFTA strongly affected the region and, once explicated, provide a framework for the most recent period of growth and exploitation.

Having revoked subsidies and ignored the demands of workers, the government undertook the revocation of Title IV of the 1933 Land Reform Act. The Title, guarding rural areas against encroachment by Transnational Corporations (TNC), protected Chiapas from foreign control of its resources. The "reform" of Article 27 through the removal of Title IV fulfilled a demand stipulated by NAFTA: that Mexico "open up its energy sector to foreign investment" (Teichman 145). In 1992, Title IV was repealed and foreign investment boomed. By the end of that year alone, Mexican businesses using Chiapas as a source of cheap raw materials and hydroelectric power combined with TNC's at a rapid pace. For example, Gen-

eral Tire (USA) merged with Grupo Carso (Mexico) in order to ensure "competitiveness in the world market" and accelerate development of Mexican industry (Teichman 184). Ultimately, TNC's slid into the Mexican economy, supposedly to assist in "agroindustrial development," and created a fast grip on Mexico in the two years before the passage of NAFTA.

During its courtship of Free Trade, the Mexican government adhered, in policy and philosophy, to the vision of a stabilized economy advocated by the authors of NAFTA. This "macroeconomic stability" sought by Mexico with land deregulation and the opening of the country to foreign (U.S.) investment provided an atmosphere conducive to rebellion by 1994 (Grinde 90). Agro-industrialization, as nominally undertaken by TNC's, allowed corporations to have dominion over agricultural production. Such interests regarded food only as a source of profits, not as a means of subsistence. Out of the most economically marginalized sector of Mexican society came an open statement against the political system responsible for the selling of commodity production to foreign interests. In 1994, the EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional), on the day that NAFTA went into effect, occupied two towns in Chiapas. They proclaimed the need for Chiapas to have control over their own resources and their own communities (Grinde 160). While international organizations such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development insisted NAFTA would facilitate "structural reform" by promoting privatization (OECD), Mexico's tailoring to the demands of Free Trade punished the peasants of Chiapas.

NAFTA presents the latest episode of disruption in the economic history of Chiapas. Beginning with the earliest efforts by the Spanish to exploit and expand the established economy, Chiapas has felt the most brutal re-

percussions of misuse and abuse by powers federal and foreign. At present, the lowland fields are exhausted due to over-development, and the death of Title IV continues to allow TNC's to exploit the regional hydroelectric resources virtually unchecked (Cancian 44). Without a concerted attempt to arrest the economic perversion of the Chiapan countryside, its people will experience the massive frustration of interference and an enforced lack of self-determination. Chiapan history constitutes a record of economic growth followed by prolonged periods of exploitation by outside forces. Such forces, preoccupied with the possibilities of development, have demonstrated a lack of concern for the condition of Chiapans. Trends throughout Chiapan history demonstrate the human cost of commercial growth when the agents of exploitation have no consideration for human welfare. Through religious ritual, informal commerce, and revolt, the people of Chiapas have reflected, adapted, and proclaimed the failure of the commercially inclined government to provide for the most basic needs of Chiapans. From the milpa-destroying Spanish, to the disruption of labor recruitment, to the current failure of federal development policies, Chiapas has emerged maimed yet endured nonetheless. A government eager to appease the demands of "free trade" strangles the productive powers of Chiapas, thwarting the self-determination of its most valuable internal colony.

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The Intangible Bond: Nathaniel Hawthorne and Toni Morrison

Jake Livingston

Recent literary criticism has spotted a link between the classic American author Nathaniel Hawthorne and the more contemporary Toni Morrison. This link proved strong enough to support an entire course devoted to its study. This paper is an offspring of that course and specifically focuses on the transcending universality of the sylvan setting in literature. The paper explores how the characters react very similarly to being placed alone in the forest and also how the authors treat forest imagery. By using authors from two distinctly separate times this transcendence is made clear and interesting.

Were it possible to do so, placing a nineteenth-century white male in a room with a twentieth-century black female would create an awkward situation. Points of view, lifestyles, and accepted standards of society have all changed dramatically. Though they would probably keep each other entertained comparing and contrasting the changes over the years, the only matters with which they could have a true, mutual identity would be those intrinsic ones relating to the tribulations and victories of the human heart and soul.

Now assume that these people were both authors, and stamp the names Nathaniel Hawthorne on the male and Toni Morrison on the female. Their superficial subject matter is completely different as a result of their respective places in history. Hawthorne was a hopeless Romantic who wrote extensively about the corrupt Puritan way of life, while Morrison chronicles the toils of the black woman, including her struggle against the black man and the white community, as well as the one to find her identity. A closer inspection of the bodies

of their work does reveal, however, some faint similarities. Both, for example, often incorporate supernatural or inexplicable elements into their stories. The scarlet "A" that appears to Reverend Dimmesdale in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* can be compared to the ghost character of Beloved in Morrison's novel *Be-loved* in this respect. One of the stronger analogies, though, is that the characters of both authors seem to find themselves in a wilderness setting during the pivotal scenes of many works. Yet the contrasts abound. The language that describes Hawthorne's wilderness settings are, more often than not, dark, malevolent, and, perhaps the adjective he is most fond of, "gloomy." Morrison's wildernesses, on the other hand, are more supportive of her characters and give the reader a generally positive impression.

Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," a story about a man who leaves his wife to go traipsing through the midnight-blackened forest with the devil, could not substantiate the Hawthorne half of this claim any better. As he begins his trek, Young Goodman

Brown takes "a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stood aside to let the narrow path creep through, and closed immediately behind it" (*Nathaniel Hawthorne's Tales* 66). It is this passage that introduces the reader to the stereotypical Hawthorne forest. Throughout the story, Young Goodman Brown repeatedly wanders through "gloomy hollow[s] of the road," "vanish[es] into the deepening gloom" of the wilderness and notices the "depth of [its] gloom" all while a "black mass of cloud was sweeping swiftly northward" (*Tales* 69,70). To compound this Halloween-type atmosphere, the devil himself carried an obvious symbol of sin and evil—a staff "which bore the likeness of a great black snake," and this similarity is only accentuated by the dancing moonlight and shadows of the gloomy forest (66).

The Puritan-inhabited forest of "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" further accuses Hawthorne of having a wilderness setting template that could merely be inserted into any story where a forest was required. The Puritans of the story are depicted as "men of iron" who "shook their heads and frowned so darkly" as they "toil[ed] through the difficult woods" (93). The forest *before* the arrival of the Puritans does, however, convey a positive image to the skimming reader. Hawthorne floods this section with images of mirth and gaiety, as "Garden flowers, and blossoms of the wilderness, laughed gladly forth amid the verdure, so fresh and dewy, that they must have grown by magic on that happy pine tree" (89). The surrounding wilderness is nonetheless depicted as "melancholy" and "black," and there are even textual intimations of gloominess within the bounds of Merry Mount. In describing the May-Pole, Hawthorne notes that "where this green and flowery splendor terminated, the shaft of the May-Pole was stained . . ." (89). The words "terminated" and "stained" suggest that there is more to Merry Mount than carefree mirth

making. "The boughs of the May-Pole quivered to the sound" of the citizens' playful music as if uneasy about their jollity and concerned about their apparent lack of purpose.

Hawthorne's most famous wilderness scene, perhaps, is contained in *The Scarlet Letter*. Yet again Hawthorne focuses on "the gloom of this dark forest," a forest which is "primeval," "black and dense" (*The Scarlet Letter* 125,133). Within this forest there is a "sad little brook" that babbles perpetually "its unintelligible secret of some very mournful mystery that had happened" and fills the entire wilderness with its sorrows. Hawthorne turns the reader's eye heavenward to behold "the gloomy sky" above and "the threatening storm" that looms overhead (130). It is this setting into which the author thrusts sinners Hester Prynne and the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale, while little Pearl romps around "the dim wood," conversing with the melancholy brook. Deep within this wilderness, Hawthorne stages the climax of *The Scarlet Letter*, and Hester and Dimmesdale are left to search for their respective dignities and self worths.

The wildernesses of Toni Morrison offer a less intimidating alternative to those of Hawthorne. The authors both allow their characters to mature in these forests, which helps to tie the literary epochs together, but a cursory reading of the Morrisonian setting comes across as more benevolent than Hawthorne's "gloomy," vengeful ones.

The wilderness scenes of Morrison's *Beloved* are filled with the uplifting images of spirituality and rebirth as opposed to Hawthorne's sin and repression. One of the first scenes the reader comes across depicts a young Denver making a familiar trek through the woods to a bower that had been formed by "five boxwood bushes, planted in a ring, [that] had started stretching toward each other . . . to form a round, empty room seven feet high, its walls fifty inches of murmuring leaves" (Morrison, *Beloved* 28). In the short

passage that follows, the reader is fed a history of Denver and her bower. He gets the sense that the room serves as a sort of asylum: "First a playroom (where the silence was softer), then a refuge (from her brothers' fright) . . ." (28). Denver was able to "crawl into this room[, and] . . . stand all the way up in emerald light" (28). The emerald light suggests the fertile, life-giving atmosphere of the verdant leaves that encircle her as she is bathed in the light. The room also "smelled like a roomful of flowers," (due to the stolen cologne she had stashed in her hideout), and the union of a little girl and flowers could never conceivably connote the negative (28).

Another dominant forest scene is discovered when the narrator recounts Baby Suggs's forest gatherings. These gatherings were a devotional of sorts, attended by "every black man, woman, and child who could make it through" (87). Baby Suggs is described as an "unchurched preacher" and is given the appropriate epithet "holy" by the narrator (87). She is even shaped into a Christ figure, when she practically quotes Jesus by saying "Let the children come!" (87). And they run to her. Baby Suggs's wilderness services were filled with barefoot dancing, joyous laughing, and crying "for the living and the dead" (87). She commands each member of her congregation to "love [his] heart," and, out in the forest away from the repressive white population, her followers believe her and leave with a renewed sense of hope.

The most elaborate, lengthy, and arguably important wilderness scene in *Beloved* is that which relays Denver's birth to the reader. When Sethe enters the forest, her feet are swollen to the point that they were merely a "loaf of flesh scalloped by five toenails" (30). She meets a lanky white girl named Amy Denver who tends to the needs of the pregnant black woman. The forest becomes a place filled with remedies and comfort. There was a lean-to shelter in the woods, filled with leaves and rocks out of which Amy fashioned a make-

shift bed for the near-death Sethe, where she proceeded to massage the loaves of flesh in an effort to resurrect them. She bandages Sethe's whip-shredded back with spider webs, stands up, and steps into "the sun that lit her hair" as she sings a lullaby taught to her by her mother. The song is filled with language of chirping crickets, fairies, "silken trees," and hovering moonbeams surrounding a "quiet cozy home" (80,81).

Morrison also chooses to set Milkman's self-realizations in the wilderness on the outskirts of a small town in her novel *Song of Solomon*. His hike through the forest is difficult, yet Morrison uses language that suits the positive changes that are slowly coming over Milkman. "He lay back on the grass" in one instance to "let the sunshine warm him" as "he opened his mouth so the clear air could bathe his tongue" (249). He eventually reaches his destination—a cave which, he believed, harbored a long lost stash of gold. When nearing this cave, he smells money and relates it to "candy and sex and twinkling lights" (251). It makes him happy. He becomes empowered with a sense of vigor and a drive "to win. There was nothing like it in the world" (251). He is also able to, much like Amy Denver of *Beloved*, use the wilderness as an ally. He "pull[s] a branch from a bush . . . [and] let it graze the ground before him as he walked" (*Solomon* 252). His famished stomach finds a bitter sustenance in the leaves of the trees. He notices paths through the woods and bridges that cross streams. Milkman discovers himself somewhat (yet by no means fully; this issue is not resolved until the final page of the book, and even then it is ambiguous) in the wilderness, and he seems eager to face civilization again, as he calms down when he recognizes a stile and a road, along with "Macadam, automobiles, [and] fence posts" (253).

Thus the wilderness is a setting that has transcended time. These two authors have given different overall tonalities to their settings, yet closer examination reveals that the

basic structure of a scene in the forest is remarkably similar.

A character or characters enter the wilderness in one of two states—his mind is either at peace or he is in a state of unrest. Such unrest could encompass a sinful past or the dilemma of not knowing one's direction in life. The forest reflects the character's state of mind with positive imagery conveying the former and negative the latter. The wilderness also serves to ostracize the characters from their communities and to place them in a solitary, contemplative environment where they discover that the only way to fully understand their own humanity is to remove themselves as far away from everyone else's as possible. Thus, though the contrast of Hawthorne's negative to Morrison's positive may seem to mask any possible similarities, the thematic undercurrent of both authors is strikingly similar. A closer reading of the texts even reveals deviations from the set "norm;" that is, there are positive elements to Hawthorne's forests as well as negative ones to Morrison's.

Hawthorne's gleeful side does not surface in "Young Goodman Brown," as the entire story focuses on cultic dealings with the devil and Goodman Brown's descent into madness, but the story does give Goodman Brown a better understanding of himself and of humanity as a whole. Goodman Brown goes into the forest a naive man, sure of his Puritan faith yet unsteady in the face of Satan ("he glanc[es] fearfully behind him" should there be an evil apparition stalking him), and the forest reflects his wariness (*Tales* 66). "The moment his fingers touched [the leaves of his walking stick]," for example, "they became strangely withered and dried up as with a week's sunshine" (69). The forest itself is personified, and it takes on a sort of "bully" persona. Within the span of only one page, "the echoes of the forest mocked" Goodman Brown in his own words, leaving him to feel "as if all Nature were laughing him to scorn" (71). He is forced to listen to "the forest laughing like

demons" throughout his entire journey (71). Taunted by the wilderness around him, Goodman Brown is driven to the point of "doubting whether there really was a heaven above him," and, distraught, he "sat himself down on the stump of a tree and refused to go any farther" (69,70). Hawthorne here presents a forest symbol that is to be repeated several times in his own works and is used a century later by Morrison.

The felled tree image surfaces in *The Scarlet Letter* and also in Morrison's *Beloved*. In "Young Goodman Brown" as well as these additional two works, the stump serves as a setting for contemplation and marks a turning point in the character's life. The stump is simply what remains of a dead tree, and the characters that sit on these remains tend to have some sort of analogous void. It is here that Goodman Brown ponders his predicament and decides that he will follow the devil no further into the black woods. Goodman Brown has the opportunity to turn back and retrace his steps to the sunny streets of Salem, effectively rendering him naive for the remainder of his life. Instead, though, he beholds the pink ribbon of his wife floating down from the heavens which "madden[s] him with despair" and fills him with disillusion, causing him to abandon his vow to stay at the stump. The ribbon is "caught in the branch of a tree," signifying that his "Faith" (the apt and allegorical name of his wife) had been snagged by the devilish forest. After this point, Goodman Brown "set[s] forth again, at such a rate that he seemed to fly . . ." as would some horrific, child-eating witch. The poor man had come to a turning point in his life at that stump in that forest—he realized for himself (whether it be true for the rest of humanity Hawthorne leaves for the reader to decide) that "there is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil; for to thee is this world given" (*Tales* 71).

Young Goodman Brown's realization is one that does not allow the forest to take on a more positive light. And, though it is a le-

gitimate realization, he is still unsettled and complicated, and the forest of Hawthorne reflects this in a dark, abstruse personality rather than a cheerful, carefree one. "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" is, too, indicative of this common forest theme.

The story begins by describing the mirthful village of Merry Mount that lies hidden deep within the forest. Approximately the first half of the story is filled with uncharacteristically positive imagery, imagery that is presented in a tone that borders on facetious. Hawthorne describes the May-Pole in this manner:

[It] was dressed with birchen boughs, and others of the liveliest green, and some with silvery leaves, fastened by ribbons that fluttered in fantastic knots of twenty different colors, but no sad ones.

(Hawthorne, *Tales* 89)

Hawthorne goes to great lengths to make sure that every silken petal of every beautifully colored flower anywhere near Merry Mount is accounted for in his description: "Bright roses glowed . . . and were scattered around their feet" (*Tales* 90). These positive descriptions seem to have one unifying characteristic—they all seem to be a result of the hands of man. The forest then suggests that such gaiety is against its nature. An English priest among the mirthmakers, for example, stood "so close to the May-Pole" at one point "that its boughs shaded his jovial face" (90). The elderly pine tree here seems disgruntled in a way, angry at the citizens of Merry Mount for bedecking him year after year with bright colors and bough upon bough of fresh roses. By shading the bright, happy face of the priest, the tree symbolically casts him into the shadows of the dark forest as a sort of sermon against the people he commands. Hawthorne's extravagant descriptions, his subtly negative word choice, and his clever hinting all suggest that the mirthmakers are

confused (if not consciously then subconsciously); this is a scenario that joins nicely with the Hawthorne/Morrison wilderness scene. Edith, the honored "Lady of the May," confirms these suspicions by "fancy[ing] that these shapes of our jovial friends are visionary, and their mirth unreal, and that we are no true Lord and Lady of the May". Then, as an affirmative answer from the forest, "down came a little shower of withering rose leaves from the May-Pole" (91).

To contrast the "positive" characterization of the citizens of Merry Mount, or perhaps to mask the more subtle negative one, Hawthorne portrays the Puritan invaders as "grisly saints" who would transform Merry Mount into "a land of clouded visages, of hard toil, of sermon and psalm, for ever" (93). The already grim depiction of the Puritans is darkened even further when the narrator describes their actions. They capture the mirthmakers, bind them to pine trees, and "bestow on them a small matter of stripes apiece . . . Further penalties, such as branding and cropping of ears," were added to the list of punishments for the prisoners. As for the dancing bear, the "energetic Puritan" cries, "Shoot him through the head!" (95). They even go so far as to "[assault] the hallowed May-Pole" (94). With this gesture, the felled tree image surfaces again, and, though it is not the seat of a single person, it may as well be one for the entire village of Merry Mount. For, as all the decorations that the people had worked so hard to arrange came tumbling to the earth, "the last day of mirth passed from Merry Mount" (94).

"The May-Pole of Merry Mount" further strengthens the claim of a stereotypical Hawthorne forest. The people of Merry Mount do not realize that "mirth is but the counterfeit of happiness," and the wilderness itself reflects their ignorance with morose imagery (94). The forest is even crueler to the Puritans, whose belief that tiresome toil, per-

petual prayer, and a stringent lifestyle were the keys to happiness. In this manner, Hawthorne uses his forests to juxtapose two extremes in an attempt to create a balanced compromise. *The Scarlet Letter* also uses such juxtaposition in the forest, as Pearl's oneness with nature and perceived innocence contrasts with the heavy burden of sin carried by Hester Prynne and the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale.

The Scarlet Letter sees the use of Hawthorne's positive forest imagery, though it is nonetheless equaled by the negative. The wilderness is benevolent to little Pearl, while it avoids Hester completely. The sunshine becomes Pearl's playmate; she claims, "I am but a child. It will not flee from me; for I wear nothing on my bosom yet!" (*Letter* 125). When Hester attempts to join her daughter in "the magic circle," "the sunshine vanished" (125). Hester also notices "with what natural skill [Pearl] has made . . . simple flowers adorn her[self]," as opposed to the unnatural skill the people of Merry Mount used to adorn their beloved emblem. Pearl, then, is more attuned to nature than her mother, as she has not been placed on a platform and ridiculed before the entire town. She even dwells in the forest, away from the watchful eyes of the community. Her only impurity is that she is a bastard daughter, yet her status in the community does not seem to trouble her, and she goes so far as to exhibit an elemental understanding of her situation in that she relates the letter on her mother's breast to the hand of the minister that always rests on its owner's heart. Because of this, Pearl is innocent and at peace with herself, and the forest reflects this. Hester, on the other hand, feels compelled to drift "deep[er] into the wood to secure themselves from the observation of any casual passenger along the forest-track" (127).

Hester also meets Dimmesdale within this forest, and they sit, "side by side . . . on the mossy trunk of a fallen tree" (133). The felled tree image surfaces once again. They sit on the dead tree, which is covered with a

blanket of moss to signify a sort of rebirth; their dead, broken lives can be transformed into something different yet equally alive. The lives each of them once knew is slowly rotting away, yet it is feeding a new growth. On this trunk, Hester and Dimmesdale plot to take to the sea, sail to Europe, and leave their wretched lives to drown in the water behind them. More importantly, Dimmesdale proclaims that Roger Chillingworth "has violated the sanctity of the human heart. Thou and I, Hester, never did so!" (133). On this fallen tree, the two are able to come to terms with their sin, perhaps though a form of rationalization, but the couple leaves the stump with a newfound sense of hope and strength. The minister, whose mental turmoil had manifested itself physically, exclaims, "I seem to have flung myself—sick, sin-stained, and sorrow-blackened—down upon these forest-leaves, and to have risen up all made anew . . ." (137). Hester casts the scarlet letter from her bosom, and, "all at once, as with a sudden smile of heaven, forth burst the sunshine, pouring a very flood into the obscure forest" (138). The sunshine, seeing that Hester is now symbolically at peace with her sin, befriends her as it has her daughter.

This friendship lasts only as long as Hester is deep within the forest, away from the condescending stares of the townsfolk. Pearl, as a representative of the wilderness, knows her mother is not yet pure enough to abandon her letter. It lands on the margin of the brook; had it splashed into the water it would have floated away forever and given the melancholy brook one more sorrow to tell all who would listen. Hester's daughter will not rejoin her until she has fastened this letter again to her breast, again able to face the community, and, as she does, "a gray shadow seemed to fall across her" (143). Thus the forest also serves as an escape from reproach and ignominy, but this security is not able to be carried away from the darkness.

Also introduced in *The Scarlet Letter* is

the symbol of the river or stream that separates two worlds. It is hinted at in Hester and Dimmesdale's plot to cross the sea, to leave their sinful world behind and cross the water, letting it symbolically cleanse them as they cross, to a new, sinless life. More blatantly, though, Pearl comes across a babbling brook in the forest, which seems to know "not how to be merry among sad acquaintance and events of somber hue" (*Letter* 127). While Hester and Dimmesdale converse on the mossy tree trunk, Pearl flits about the forest, frolicking with her wilderness friend. She "stood on the farther side [of the brook], gazing silently at Hester and the clergyman" (141). Pearl occupies the side of the brook reserved for those confident and secure with themselves, while her mother and the Reverend search among the fallen forest leaves for their self-worth. The minister himself notices "that this brook is the boundary between two worlds, and that thou canst never meet thy Pearl again" (141).

The Scarlet Letter exemplifies the Hawthorne forest perhaps best of all. It shows the juxtaposition of those at peace and those in turmoil, and the forest's reaction to each. Besides using mere language to convey these images, Hawthorne uses the mossy tree trunk and the separating river as supportive devices. The wilderness scenes of Toni Morrison use these same devices to convey the security of her characters, and a bridge between the century separating their writings is built.

In *Beloved*, for example, Morrison shows Denver's need for solitude and contemplation by providing her with a bower that exists deep within the woods, behind the field that backs up to 124 but before the stream laps against its banks. The location of this boxwood bower is significant in that it is placed before the stream. Correlating with the water imagery of Hawthorne, Denver is not yet ready to leave the security of 124 altogether and cross into the world on the yonder side of the stream; she states, "124 and the field be-

hind it were all the world she knew or wanted" (101). Denver, foaled in the forest, exists in much the same manner as Hester Prynne's Pearl. Both are accompanied by a positive characterization of the wilderness. Pearl is bathed in a vibrant yellow sunlight, Denver is covered in a fertile green one. Denver's bower is able to rejuvenate her worn-out soul, as "she felt ripe and clear, and salvation was as easy as a wish" (29). Her not being able to cross the river shows that, though she is secure with herself for the most part, she is unable to patch the rift that exists between her and her mother:

Her mother had secrets--things she wouldn't tell; things halfway told.

Well, Denver had them too. And hers were sweet--sweet as lily-of-the-valley cologne (38).

This droplet of insecurity could be considered one of the more subtle negative images in Morrison's wilderness imagery, indicating that all is not always well amid the verdure of Morrison's fiction.

The scene containing Denver's birth introduces several other forest themes concurrent with those of Hawthorne. The most obvious, perhaps, is that, in the solidarity of the wilderness, a pregnant escaped slave girl and an emaciated white girl are free to not only meet but share the miracle of birth. A more prevalent forest image exists in a more abstract light, however. Amy Denver, while nursing the tender, pregnant Sethe, discovers a horrendous set of master-inflicted scars on the slave woman's back. She takes the lacerated, dead lash marks into her imagination and transforms them into a single picture that is full of life:

It's a tree, Lu. A chokecherry tree. See, here's the trunk--it's red and split wide open, full of sap. . . You got a mighty lot of branches. Leaves, too, look like, and dern if these ain't blossoms . . . Your back got a whole tree on it. In bloom. (79).

The pieces of forest on Sethe's back were a painful reminder of the horrors of slave life. Amy's interpretation of the scars, though, gives them a connotation worth rejoicing over instead of repressing. Sethe will not die alone in the woods, nor will her unborn child, Amy seems to be saying. The tree on her back is in bloom, and Sethe's life has the potential to be beautiful and fruitful as well.

The namesake of the book is the ghost-character Beloved. Murdered by the hands of her mother to keep her from knowing the horrors of slave life, Beloved returns in the form of an apparition that haunts her mother, making her pay a form of penance. Beloved forces Sethe to confront her past, and she can either be overwhelmed and destroyed by it or she can recover and live a productive life. Amy's interpretation of the scars on her back intimates the resolution. When Beloved first enters the novel, she appears as a "fully dressed woman" showing characteristics of a newborn. She emerges from a stream that exists beyond Denver's bower "sopping wet and breathing shallow" (50), much like a child fresh from the womb is covered with amniotic fluid and has trouble adjusting to breathing. She traverses the woods and ends up in "the yard of the slate-gray house. Exhausted again, she sat down on the first handy place—a stump not far from the steps of 124" (50). Here again the stump image so prevalent in Hawthorne's work surfaces. Beloved sits on the stump because she is exhausted, yes, but also because she has emerged from her uneasy sleep of death to rectify the wrong of which she feels she is a victim. She sits where once sat an alive, mighty tree and feels a union with it. As she is invited into the house by Paul D and Denver, she leaves the stump and the lives of the people of 124 would be changed forever.

Beloved's forest scenes, then, have many correlations to those of Hawthorne. The wilderness separates the outcast characters from the community, forces them to confront

pasts they are not comfortable with, uses the river as a boundary between worlds that some are ready to cross while others aren't, and provides a stump where the characters can sort out their troubles. Morrison's novel *Song of Solomon* is merely a continuation of these similarities.

As previously noted, the character Milkman enters the forest in search of a lost stash of gold and exits with the clues he needs to decipher the nature of his true self. As he begins his journey, the walk is nothing more than a casual stroll through the woods, the only inconvenience being that the river was farther away than he had believed. Once he reaches this stream, beyond which lies the gold, his troubles begin. The flowing body of water here is related to those of *Beloved* and of Hawthorne. Previously, Milkman had had no direction in life; he was content with being who his father wanted him to be. Now, though, his goal is to "get the gold" (*Solomon* 172). The river separates the two worlds he has been faced with—that in which he has no purpose and that in which he has something to strive for—and he dives in with no preparation whatsoever. As his immature body tries to cross this symbolic river, his quest complicates. He realizes the faultiness of his haste: "If he hadn't been so eager, maybe he could have found a narrower part to cross . . . Thoughts of what he should have done . . . irritated him" (249). He crosses the river and emerges sopping wet, reborn in the same way as Beloved; he "let the high sunshine warm him" and give him a new beginning (249). He goes through more difficult terrain, his travel through a new childhood. Finally, "some fifteen to twenty feet above him," he saw "a black hole in the rock" that was the cave where the gold was supposedly hidden (172). Milkman sees this cave as a black hole, because, as the popular science-fiction hypothesis suggests, it has the potential to take him back in time, to help him identify and correct the problems of his past. Related to the troubled pasts

of Sethe and Prynne and Dimmesdale, Milkman has a mechanism, a window through time, with which to confront his. Milkman submits to the wilderness, treating it as an ally rather than an adversary, becoming "agile . . . He left off thinking and let his body do the work" (251). He sheds the reminders of his father's gaudy past that had become his present—his watch breaks, the sole separates from his shoe, and his cigarettes are soaked. In this gesture he abandons the civilized world, and gets an inkling of his true self there in the wilderness.

While walking through the forest, he wonders why these woods were so much more difficult than "City Park, the tended woods on Honoré Island . . . where tiny convenient paths led you through" (250). The "woods" he had previously known had all been meticulously arranged by human hands, and the true nature of the wilderness shocked him. Similarly, the May-Pole revelers had the same sort of horrid epiphany when they realized that their beloved bannerstaff did not desire the gay bedeckment they had thrust upon it. Their false happiness did not warrant the true emo-

tion from the forest.

Through a somewhat narrow yet representative cross-section of the respective canons of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Toni Morrison, it is evident that the two authors structure their wilderness scenes in much the same manner, despite their historical separation of a century. This "coincidence" suggests more than that, an archetype perhaps. The toiling, suffering, and victories of mankind are always better elucidated in man's primal, original home—the forest. The authors give the forest a mystical link with the souls of their characters, letting it reflect their innermost passions. Morrison and Hawthorne, though they differ in gender, ethnicity, and literary era, are kindred spirits, as they have shown that the true nature and needs of man has remained unchanged throughout time.

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Reunion: A Discussion of Special Relativity

Jon Malone

Galileo's revolutionary books, *Two New Sciences* and *The Two Chief World Systems*, were in the form of a dialogue between three characters discussing his thoughts as compared to commonly accepted thought. His theories are sometimes called "Galilean Relativity," which explains that motion is relative. This relativity is why you can drink coffee on an airplane without spilling it and why we cannot sense the motion of the earth through space.

Salviati represents the new science of Galileo, while Simplicio defends the old science of Aristotle or Copernicus. Sagredo is an impartial participant in the discussion who eventually is persuaded to believe Salviati. This device made Galileo's books appealing to many different audiences and was able to naturally answer many common questions.

This paper uses the same three characters in a discussion of special relativity. Its background is the debate over the speed of light; the velocity was proven to be 186,000 miles per second (or c) by the laws of electromagnetism. Scientists then had to decide with respect to what the light traveled at that speed, and they created a concept called *aether*. Its properties, however, were contradictory and the idea could not be made to work. It was Einstein who developed special relativity, which essentially says that light propagates not through *aether* but through empty space and travels at speed c with respect to all observers. The implications of this were far reaching, causing him to question the very nature of space and time itself.

Sagredo: It has been a long time since last we met. I always enjoy our discussion of ideas.

Salviati: Few ideas, scientific or otherwise, have gained such overwhelming acceptance and solidity as has our present system of physics. I admit that often I was tempted to think of nearly all of nature's secrets as being presently known.

Simplicio: Indeed, I wonder why we have come together today, as there are no longer mysteries for us to discuss. Why, I have in my notebook formulas regarding everything from the orbit of a satellite to the charge of an electron.

Sagr: I too am curious to see why we meet today, for it was Salviati who bid me to arrange this meeting. It seems that he believes there to be ideas wholly novel and imagina-

tive that we should discuss. As I am not as trained scientifically as either of you (although my curiosity is more than adequate), I do not know the object of our discussion.

Simp. Nor do I. Who could dispute Newton's Law of Gravity? Who could deny that light is an electromagnetic wave moving at 186,000 miles per second?

Salv. I must caution you, dear Simplicio, that you were once defending the Philosopher's system of nature as confidently as you do the present one.

Simp. Ah, but our ideas are confirmed by precise instruments of experimentation. Numbers do not lie, Salviati.

Salv. You are right that numbers do not lie, but who records the numbers? And who makes the instruments to record those numbers? And why should two people observe

the same thing about any given event? Certainly it cannot be denied that in everyday experience physical laws are very accurate. But our limitations do not allow us to see just how accurate. We simply assume them to be true.

Simp. As our technology improves, our measurements can only get more and more accurate.

Salv. Who, then, decides what frame of reference is best from which to make any measurement?

Sagr. Shouldn't a frame of absolute rest be the preferred frame of reference? I know that absolute motion is not detectable by mechanical experiment, but the observed speed of light will reveal the observer's absolute motion, and he can make any measurement knowing his frame of reference.

Simp. Well said! That is the common ground that observers with different motions can look to that state of absolute rest: rest with respect to the aether, of course. I only wait for the results of the Michelson-Morley experiment to tell me the exact motion of the earth.

Sagr. What is the nature of this experiment?

Simp. The design of the machine is not necessary to understand, but essentially it is a measurement of the differing velocities of light in different directions. Light that travels "downstream" and back in the aether will arrive later than light that travels across the stream and cause a measurable change in the visible interference pattern as the entire device is rotated. Then the speed and direction of the earth in the aether can be calculated.

Salv. Well said, Simplicio! But I must confess that I have been a bit unfair, for I have seen the results already, and they tell conclusively: the speed of light is the same in all directions, regardless of the relative motion of the earth. What say you to this?

Sagr. I do not see how that is possible. If two bodies are moving in opposite directions, each at speed v , surely the observed speed of one from the other's frame of reference will be $2v$.

Logically the same principle should apply to light, true?

Simp. Indeed it must, if the universe is logical. Perhaps matter is flattened by the aether by an amount to exactly cancel out the change in speed.

Salv. Clever, but your view has too many pre-suppositions.

Sagr. What do you mean?

Salv. First, you take your aether for granted as the medium for light. Your description of its properties is often self-contradictory, but you say it exists because you are unwilling to think in any but the accepted way.

Simp. But the aether is necessary. Maxwell's equations clearly predict that light must travel at speed c , and that speed must be with respect to something.

Salv. Yes, quite, right.

Sagr. With respect to what, then, does light move at speed c ?

Salv. Why, with respect to everything!

Simp. Ridiculous! The contradictions in the statement are far worse than any you may find in my aether. Such a world would deem all numbers and measures meaningless. There is beauty in Galilean Relativity, but you offer a hopeless relativity, in which nothing is certain, not even geometry.

Sagr. I must admit, Salvati, that this theory does have unpleasant results, which are contrary to common sense and reason.

Salv. You are partially right, in that the implications of my last statement are contrary to our intuition and everyday experience, but they follow logically from the results of Michelson's experiment. Let me restate my theory in a more aesthetically appealing way. You mentioned Galilean Relativity, which says that the laws of motion are valid in all inertial frames of reference. Suppose all laws of physics, including electromagnetism, were valid in all inertial frames of reference. It would then follow that all observers would find the same value for c .

Sagr. Interesting, but you have yet to explain

how this can be.

Salv. Your problem is that your ideas of space are too rigid, and your notions of time too inflexible. Observers moving at different velocities, when measuring the speed of light from A to B, will disagree on both the distance traveled and the time required to make the given trip. But one thing will remain constant: the ratio of distance over time, or the speed.

Sagr. Give to me an example, so that I may better understand your idea.

Salv. Certainly. Suppose two space ships are at rest at point A, and point B is exactly one light-year away. Suppose that ship 1 stays at point A, and ship 2 leaves for point B at the same instant that a beam of light is transmitted, while traveling at nearly the speed of light. The light is reflected back, and ship 2 follows it on the return trip. Obviously ship 1 will say that the light took two years on the round trip, and perhaps ship 2 arrived one second later and was 186,000 miles behind the light when it returned to A. If ship 2 stops when the light reaches point A, it would conclude that it had only been travelling for one second, since it always saw the light as traveling at 186,000 miles per second, and at the end the light was 186,000 miles away. The pilot of ship 2 will be two years younger, minus one second! The only explanation is that, compared to surroundings, time for the pilot of ship 2 slows down. He also records a much shorter distance traveled. This is necessary by the constant ratio $d/t=c$.

Simp. This is certainly very interesting. You imply that it is impossible for any object to travel equal to or greater than the speed of light compared to anything else. What mechanism would prevent any object from accelerating beyond that speed?

Sagr. I was wondering the same. What is the effect of a force on an object traveling near the speed of light as observed by someone "at rest"?

Salv. Ironically, Newton's second law of motion answers that.

Simp. $F=ma$ is a solution to this relativity of yours? Wait... do you suggest that supplying a force not only adds acceleration, it adds mass?

Salv. That is precisely what I suggest. Follow that thought.

Simp. As an object is accelerated, it gains mass, which makes further acceleration more difficult, and the force needed grows at an exponential rate. No force, no matter how great, would be able to overcome the effect.

Salv. Well said! Now you are beginning to think objectively, following thoughts to their logical conclusion contrary to accepted pre-suppositions.

Sagr. How is it that these effects are not present in everyday life?

Salv. They are, but are imperceptible at low speeds. If we were a space-faring civilization that routinely traveled at speeds close to that of light, then these effects would be as much a part of our common sense as is friction or gravity.

Sagr. Simplicio said that force adds mass, as implied by $F=ma$. Doesn't this defy the law of conservation of mass and the law of conservation of energy?

Salv. I propose that mass and energy are different forms of the same basic "thing." A law of the conservation of mass-energy would be more appropriate, then.

Simp. If energy has mass, then how can light, which is energy, travel at speed c ?

Salv. The answer is that all of light's energy, or mass if you like, is kinetic. It has no rest energy, and therefore cannot exist at rest, but has a literal "need for speed." (Pardon the anachronism.)

Sagr. Is there a definite conversion ratio of mass and energy?

Salv. There is a formula, derived from Maxwell's theory and from the law of momentum, and it is this: $E=mc^2$.

Simp. I suppose that is why we do not see mass "disappear" in any present-day experiment. With such a large conversion factor, the

energy produced even in large generators or a huge explosion requires only a negligible loss of mass.

Salv. Yes, quite true. That is why our laws of mechanics, such as $K.E. = \frac{1}{2}mv^2$, work so well in experiment. There is then no need to abandon them totally, for they are quite useful. At the same time we must realize that they are merely approximations, however good they may be.

Simp. There remains one question that troubles me.

Sagr. One question?

Simp. If space and time differ among different frames of reference, then how can any measurement be considered truly valid?

Sagr. I admit that the utter relativity of time and space that we have discussed to this point bothers me as well.

Salv. And it did me, at least initially. But then I began to picture a reality more fundamental than that which you and I see a reality to which all observers can look and find total agreement.

Sagr. What is the nature of such a reality?

Salv. Notice that I referred to this as a picture of reality – a mathematical picture, actually. If we treat time as a fourth dimension...

Simp. Wait a moment... Do you mean to say that time is essentially the same thing as space?

Salv. Obviously they are not identical. One cannot simply go forward or backward in time as easily as one walks across a room. What I do mean is that they are different aspects of an underlying reality, which can be thought of as space-time. All objects have a definite motion in four-dimensional space-time, to which all observers will agree. The unit for time here is stated as a distance done by multiplying the time by c . There is one major difference for the time coordinate it uses imaginary numbers...

Sagr. Imaginary numbers?

Simp. A number whose square is negative. It certainly reminds us of the uniqueness of time.

Salv. Indeed. The path of any object in this

system remains constant. Different observers might disagree on how much distance and how much time separates the beginning and the end of the path. This implies that what one observer sees as two simultaneous events, separated only by distance, will be separated by both space and time to another observer. The spatial separation would appear shorter.

Sagr. Does this mean that moving objects appear shortened?

Simp. If this were true, then both observers would think the other was shortened!

Salv. Yes, this is true, but remember: What we observe is merely our limited interpretation of reality. We must look beyond what we see before us.

Sagr. This certainly makes one rethink what is too often taken for granted.

Salv. And that very act has been the basis for many great advances in science, from the work of the Academician (Galileo), to Newton, to Maxwell, and the others in between.

Simp. This draws into question the notion that man will someday truly understand all of nature at a fundamental level, in all of its subtleties.

Salv. Perhaps you are right, Simplicio. But in any case, we must continue to search for what is true, without hiding from data that might alter or even tear down our picture of reality.

Sagr. I think that perhaps we should end our discussion for today. I need time to reflect on all that has been said. What should be the object of our next discussion?

Salv. I have been considering how an accelerated frame of reference compares to a gravitational field, namely the indistinguishability of the two.

Simp. This sounds fascinating, indeed. Until then, my colleagues.

The Cinema of Moral Responsibility

Lauren Terry

The subject of responsibility has always been a complex one, and especially so today, as both law and psychology puzzle the issue. To clarify the matter, I propose to separate *responsibility* from *right and wrong*; a person can be given credit as well as blame. The question is, to whom--and when--does that credit or blame go? Several films and television programs have attempted to tackle these issues; above all, they illustrate the close ties among responsibility, freedom, and personhood.

Responsibility in a "Predetermined" World

A crucial issue in the discussion of moral responsibility is that of predetermination vs. chance--that is to say, if our lives are predetermined, are we responsible for anything we do? As the existentialists note, to assign a greater meaning to the whole of life robs the individual's of meaning. If our lives have already been written, printed and bound, so to speak, what's the use of living them?

The X-Files actually has a very interesting take on this subject with the episode "Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose." The insurance salesman of the title has an unwanted ability to foresee how people will die--and it's sucking the joy out of his life. though he does reluctantly agree to use his "gift" to help find an equally psychic serial killer, at first Bruckman refuses:

Bruckman: He'll commit more murders whether I help you or not...How could I see the future if it didn't already exist?

Mulder: If the future is written, then why bother to do anything?

Bruckman: Now you're catching on...

Adds Bruckman,

I might adversely affect the fate of the future. His next victim might be the mother of the daughter whose son invents the time machine, and the son goes back in time and changes history...and then Columbus never discovers America, man never lands on the moon, the U.S. never invades Grenada...or something less significant, resulting in the fact that my father never meets my mother, and consequently, I'm never born...

In this dialogue, Bruckman neatly summarizes the issues of predetermination (as well as the premise of the film *Back to the Future*). There are, however, a couple of hitches: If an act of free will can change that "predetermined" course of history, was history really all that predetermined? That is to say, if life is predetermined and there is no free will, how can a nonexistent free will threaten it? Was it predetermined that the son of the daughter of the mother killed by the Puppet murderer would "upset" Past A and replace it with Past B, thereby making Past A not so determined after all?

But these considerations, besides being somewhat moot, merely make the brain do loop-de-loops. (Take a Cartesian moment and consider: If we follow Descartes' assertion that our own senses are not to be trusted, who is to say that our present *right now* is not only a dream, but perhaps one of several "presents" that have *already* been altered by a little monkey business in a time machine?) Predetermination concerns aside, Darin Morgan's script contradicts Bruckman's pessimism in a fashion that would make Sartre proud. Bruckman has predicted, among other things, that he himself will die before the killer is caught, but does not fall prey to the Puppet; rather, he kills himself. Existence itself is a choice that "differentiates man from the squirrels," to quote Dr. Myers; burdened by his "gift," Bruckman chooses to live no longer, but could have easily thwarted his own prediction if had chosen to do so.

Furthermore, he shares a prophetic vision with the agents that Mulder will fall prey to Puppet in a hotel kitchen, but sharing the information allows Mulder to recognize the situation as it happens and prevent it. Whimpers the Puppet as he dies, shot by an intervening Scully, "Hey...that's not the way it was supposed to happen!"

Morgan's script takes the view that chance plays too great a role in life for anything to be written in stone. Several plots hinge on chance: the anecdote that the Big Bopper could have lived or died on the flip of a coin; that Bruckman would be safe-housed in the hotel where the Puppet works; and that, indeed, Scully would walk in on the attack in the kitchen ("I took the freight elevator by mistake") and save the day. In the end, "Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose" argues that, whatever life deals you, by chance or by predetermination, you are responsible for your own response to it.

One question remains, however-if life is truly not predetermined, then how was Bruckman able to warn Mulder about the

kitchen?

But what if life truly was predetermined-not in an absolute sense, by a deity, but on a smaller scale, by a more mortal "higher power"? What is the role of responsibility in such a setting? *The Truman Show* takes just such a situation, complete with Cartesian Evil Deceiver, and shows how such a theft of free will constitutes a wrongful denial of personhood.

Everyone has had suspicions at times that life is rigged. Coincidences happen; we magically seem to be in the right place at the right time...or the wrong place at a colossally wrong time. Truman, however, begins to notice that, not only do the coincidences of his life feel contrived, but that the world seems to revolve around him. What he doesn't realize is that he has been the unwitting star of a television show from birth. When his long-lost, "dead" father breaks onto the set, Christof, its creator, separates them not only by a sudden surge of marathon runners, but also by a suspicious herd of pedestrians that shove his "father" (really a disgruntled actor) onto a passing bus. (The next morning's paper hilariously alludes to a program to get the "homeless" off the streets.) Then, one day, Truman's car radio fritzes out...and then seems to report Truman's every move; when he steps out into traffic, the drivers magically stop for him (rather than honk, curse, and hurl insults).

Having already yanked the love of Truman's life from the show and selected a different woman for his wife, Christof now throws a new girl into Truman's path specifically, we gather, to lead Truman astray from his marriage...and boost the ratings. Christof's defense to the viewing public is that "Truman can leave any time he wants to," yet he throws ludicrous obstacles into his path: an artificial fear of travel, uncooperative travel agents, broken buses, impromptu traffic jams, forest fires, nuclear meltdowns, and even a near-fatal hurricane. By the film's end, the relationship between creator and "son" has

broken down to a battle of wills, possibly to the death.

What screenwriter Andrew Niccol conveys so beautifully, however, is just why Truman would risk so much. His life is in Seahaven, after all, is balmy and pleasant; it's a gilded cage that keeps him. and, as Christof insists, though Truman's life does preclude free will, it's engineered for the most part) with Truman's own happiness in mind, something that cannot be said of the cold, cruel world of chance championed by the existentialists. What Niccol understands, however, is that to deny Truman free will is to deny him his dream: he wants to be an explorer, and has caught a whim to see Fiji, something a control-freak producer could never arrange. To deny Truman choice is to deny him not only his freedom, but also his very personhood, the very essence of his Truman-ness. Remember, existence requires choice to differentiate us from squirrels, and Truman can feel this-the very nausea of his freedom slipping away with every choice made not by himself, but by Christof. Thus, the intriguingly named characters ("Christ-of" and "True-man"?) must have their confrontation at the film's end in order for Truman to morally come of age and inherit his free will as he sets out into the world.

Responsibility and Personhood

Thus, responsibility and personhood, we see, are inextricably entwined: in order to fully be persons, we must have the freedom to choose to exist as such. But suppose we reverse the statement: if we can be held responsible, does that make us persons?

The Star Trek: The Next Generation episode "The Measure of a Man" grapples with the question of Data's status: as an android, is he person or property? Lieutenant Riker has, for the prosecution, some devastating evidence, such as when he removes Data's hand and switches him off; however, the prosecution confuses being a person with being a hu-

man. Suppose the crew of the Enterprise ran into a new alien race-and on this show, this is a distinct possibility-that switched themselves off at night rather than slept, as we do, and had a master program to switch them on in the morning; their parts would be removable, replaceable, and repairable. Yet, these creatures would also have morality, rationality, abstract thought, the potential to change, emotional and social relationships-everything on the Checklist of Personhood, if you will. to say that these creature are not persons is to ignore the pertinent evidence to the contrary and apply to them a human standard of physicality that is both erroneous and irrelevant.

Here is where the concept of moral responsibility can help us decide. Suppose that Data had killed someone; he claims self-defense, and the prosecution claims murder. Contrast this to the infamous crane crash here on the Birmingham-Southern campus last year: who was blamed, the crane or its operator? The operator, of course (who I understand was fired summarily); no one thought to ask the crane if it had crushed the roof of the future Norton Center by accident or in pure malice. Having evinced no consciousness or personhood, the crane would obviously be innocent of such a charge and simply the means by which the accident occurred. Data, on the other hand, would almost surely be put on the stand to defend his actions and explain his rationale for the act of killing: he saw a weapon, a threatening gesture, a menacing charge, etc., and chose to protect himself rather than succumb. Here, moral responsibility becomes a key factor in the cocktail of requirements that is personhood: if you decide to hold Data responsible for the death, whether you call it defense or murder, you have already decided that he is a person; if you instead punish his creator for the negligence of producing such a dangerous, uncontrollable machine, you have not.

Blade Runner then takes this dilemma a step further: are the replicants persons that

our hero Deckard must capture? If so, are they responsible for the various murders they have committed in their escape from the Offworld colony? If they are not responsible, does that make them not persons?

First of all, I would argue that the replicants are persons, based on nothing more than our checklist. Their physicality, though remarkably human in their favor, is not a concern, based on the example of the aforementioned alien race that would switch itself off for the night. The replicants prove themselves to have rationality, imagination, and problem-solving skills by envisioning and carrying to fruition an escape from bondage. Obviously they have emotional and social relationships, evinced not only by their teamwork but also by the great attachment between Roy and Pris. Also, the replicants show a distinct potential to change from their programs: Pris, the "pleasure model," manipulates Sebastian not with sex, but with kindness; Roy, the soldier, spares Deckard; and Deckard himself, if you follow the clues that he is a replicant as well, spares Rachael. As for morality, Roy in particular has a distinct sense of right and wrong—not our sense, perhaps, but he can discern that his maker Tyrell has wronged him in presuming to shorten his life span in the role of Creator, and proceeds to avenge himself.

So the replicants are persons. Now what? Had they survived, would we hold them responsible for their crimes? Or do we simply shrug and say, "Tyrell got what he deserved if he can't keep and eye on those robots of his"? I say, the answer lies somewhere in the middle. The replicants are indeed responsible, but should not be blamed for these particular acts. I would, however, credit or blame them for anything they did, say, once they had reached freedom and begun new lives. Their escape from the Offworld and through Los Angeles is more a mutiny than cold-blooded homicide; it could even be said to be self-defense.

In "The Measure of a Man," Captain

Picard defends Data with the assertion that to dismantle him with the intention of replicating him could lead to the creation of an entire race of Datas that could then, under the same theory of "property, not person," be virtually enslaved. The issues inherent in both "The Measure of a Man" and *Blade Runner* are the heart of the film *Amistad*, which discusses the real-life enslavement of blacks when they were not considered persons, as incredible as that sounds to the modern ear. The original court case involving the slave ship *La Amistad* was the numerous claims of ownership made by the ship's slave trader captain, its American salvagers, and the nation of Spain, among others—on a band of escaped Africans. Attorney Roger Baldwin's argument is that the case basically boils down to the same "person or property" issue: If the slaves are simply property, then they can't be held anymore responsible for the murders of the ship's crew any more than a man can blame "a mule," and must simply be packed off to their "rightful" owners. If, on the other hand, they are to be charged with murder, they must then be considered persons, and what man in that courtroom would not have done the same if abducted from his home and sold, a thousand miles away, into servitude? "He is a black man, you can see that," notes former president John Quincy Adams of Cinque, the mutiny's leader, "but if he were white, we wouldn't be here [in court] today. He would be someone to tell our children about in school, like Patrick Henry, and other such heroes." Imagine if the replicants had escaped, and created a community for themselves—perhaps learned, over the years, to repair themselves, prolong their lives, and procreate. Would they not, some day, tell the story of the brave ancestors who defied prejudice to regain their rights?

Thus, while personhood creates responsibility, as well as the other way around, freedom is also a third, equally inextricable quality in the equation, and, as such, includes not only the freedom to act and then be held

responsible, but also the freedom *from* the suppression of those actions. A willful, wrongful denial of that freedom can only merit a mutiny for which the captives cannot be blamed.

Responsibility and Identity

Having decided that someone is indeed a person and therefore responsible for his actions, can you then decree John Q. Smith to be *psychologically* a different John Q. Smith than the one that committed a crime?

Another episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, called "Second Chances," poses this question, but also provides a fairly handy answer. In this episode, Riker has accidentally split into two separate manifestations of the same person; this would have been a fascinating issue if they had been immediately thrown together. On one hand, you could argue that both Rikers would act the same, having had the exact same natures and nurtures up until that point. Should Riker, however, act in a way that required credit or blame, it would be necessary to praise or reproach the specific physical manifestation of Riker that acted. This, however, would be a bit strange, like morally differentiating the right hand from the left: just because the right hand saved the falling baby doesn't mean the person to whom both hands belong doesn't get the credit. Is Riker considered to be one person with two bodies, as he himself has two hands, or is he two separate, though identical, people? The issue, then, is a complicated one.

"Second Chances," however, sidesteps the issue by separating the two Rikers—for eight years, no less. As one has been marooned and the other promoted, among other things, nurture easily steps in to make the two men somewhat, if not entirely, different individuals, just as a second line drawn one degree off the origin will end up miles away from the first. "Will" Riker could certainly not be held responsible for the actions of "Thomas" Riker, whether for credit or for blame; though Will ended a relationship with Counselor Troi, Tho-

mas is given a second chance with her. However, the episode comes full circle to the shared nature resulting from the thirty-odd years Will and Thomas were the "same" person, suggesting that Thomas will not be able to resist the siren song of ambition over love anymore than Will could.

But let's say that the person in question does not magically split into two: this is the dilemma on *Northern Exposure* when Chris the DJ's past catches up to him. Again, interestingly enough, the show simplifies matters by having Chris commit a crime heavy enough to warrant tracking him down to his new home of Cicely, Alaska, but not so dastardly that the viewer won't root for him anyway. His lawyer's defense is that Chris is a substantially different person in his years A.D. (After Disappearance) than B.C. (Before Cicely), and that reading Walt Whitman transformed him in the pokey. Had Chris been hit by a car back in West Virginia, fallen into a coma, awoken with amnesia, and *then* decided to start a new life in Alaska—unaware of his parole restriction—then I could buy that "new" Chris was not responsible for breaking parole on a conviction of grand theft auto. As it is, the personality is like a rainbow, one color arising from the other; certainly red is not green, but can you pinpoint the exact place red shades into orange, and thence into yellow? Unless there is a clean break in that chain—such as amnesia—the current self is stacked upon its previous gradations and shades of self, and would collapse without them. He is, therefore, responsible for his previous actions—a decision with which Chris, in his infinite, though idiosyncratic, wisdom, advocated all along.

A more clear-cut case in which to discuss the relationship and identity would be Stanley Kubrick's adaptation of Anthony Burgess' novel *A Clockwork Orange*. First of all, though we must decide whether Alex is responsible before he is treated for the crimes he commits. Not only would Sartre say yes, but Susan Wolf as well. She gives the imagi-

nary example of JoJo the dictator's son, pointing out that the cruel whims he indulges do, in fact, constitute "the self he wants to be." Wolf expands on the concept (the italics are mine):

Some of my desires...are expressions of judgments on my part that the objects I desire are good. Insofar as my actions can be governed by the latter type of desire—governed, that is, by my values or valuational system—they are actions that I perform freely and for which I am responsible (478-479).

Wolf would argue that this "self he wants to be" is Alex's "deep self," the self of his second-order desires, even if they are contradicted by first-order desires issued by someone else, a hypnotist, perhaps. Kubrick cunningly reveals Alex's deep self in one of Malcolm McDowell's many insightful voiceovers: "What we were after was the old surprise visit. That was a real kick and good for laughs and lashings of the old ultraviolence." Alex confides that he enjoys his "ultraviolence," and understands right and wrong clearly enough to lie about his whereabouts and motives to his meek parents, his belligerent truancy officer, and later, the gullible police chaplain. In prison, in fact, Alex very convincingly plays the penitent with deep studies of the Bible—which actually fascinate him, he explains, which imagery of harlems and Alex simply chooses to do as he pleases rather than honor the right and wrong between which he can clearly distinguish.

(There is still a question here of predestination. The existentialist would say that Alex has made his choice, and made that choice on criteria he himself has chosen and thus, Alex is responsible for his actions. The determinist might that Alex was predetermined, though some inborn flaw, to be unable to resist wrong. I mentioned this to a friend of mine, who, as the son of a police officer, did not take kindly to the determinist view; "Well, if he's predetermined to kill people, then I

guess I'm predetermined to kick his ass." So it goes.)

Nor do these fantasies end after his "treatment," and I find them to be the purest indicator of Alex's deep self. When Alex submits to his "attacker" at the hospital exhibition announcing his reformation, the viewer still is skeptical, though that bootlicking is fairly impressive. The voiceover, again, though, is hugely informative: when his next trial, a scantily clad girl skips out onto the stage, we hear Alex murmur, "And the first thing that flashed into my gulliver was that I'd like to have her right down there on the floor with the old in-out, real savage." He hasn't changed at all, as his hilariously lecherous approach affirms. Yet he cannot act on his deep-self impulses, having been hobbled by the Pavlovian first-order connection between nausea and violence; in the same vein, Wolf describes patients who, once hypnotized, are "alienated from their actions," much in the way that the treatment alienates Alex from his true self (475-481).

Thus, while I would hold Alex responsible for his crimes, I cannot give him the credit for his 'good' behavior—or rather, the lack of bad. If Alex had cried, "Good God, woman, put on some clothes!" when the girl appeared, and perhaps made amends to his victims, or even felt crippling guilt, I might be able to consider that, with his unusually bad impulses disabled, his true self could emerge—as if his criminality were a disease now in remission. Alex, however, shows a horrifying zeal to return to his old ways once bad press gets the better of English bureaucracy and forces it to reverse the treatment.

A number of adolescents adore this film because they empathize with Alex, imagining themselves to be equally thwarted in their independence by "The Man"; when you're thirteen and feel blamed for everything, it's not so great a leap to identify with Alex as it would be at twenty-three. To its credit, *A Clockwork Orange* is a wonderfully provocative

adaptation of Burgess' novel and a fine piece of filmmaking as well, but I am disturbed by the suspicion that some viewers admire it for the wrong reasons. Alex is not a replicant fighting for his freedom, not a slave fighting for his rights, nor even a good man fighting the willful predetermination of his world—Alex is a creature of free will that chooses to commit crimes and is stripped of his privileges as a direct result. To deny Alex his free will is not a wrongful theft so much as a well-earned punishment. The horror of the film is not only the crimes Alex commits, but also the petty politics and mistaken philosophies that allow him back on the street to commit more.

In these films and television programs we see many slants on the issues of responsibility—some cautionary and others uplifting. Whatever the message, all affirm that personhood, freedom, and responsibility are too intimately connected to separate any one from the others and still preserve existence as we know it—and also that film is one of the most eloquent media in which to explore it.

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Heaven on Earth: An Examination of the Apocalyptic in Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*

Kim Thompson

Tony Kushner's brilliant two-part play, *Angels in America*, offers a complex and controversial commentary on issues including homosexuality, AIDS, Mormonism, Reaganomics, and millennium. In this endeavor, apocalypticism acts as Kushner's framework. The earthquakes, angels crash through ceilings, a plague kills thousands and the Antichrist (in the form of Roy Cohn and/or Ronald Reagan) walks the earth. Kushner uses this background of apocalyptic urgency to present an agenda for change and a vision for the future.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. . .
—John of Patmos, Revelation 21:1

The Judgement Day. Everyone will think they're crazy now. . . everyone will see things. Sick men will see angels, women who have houses will sell their houses, dimestore dummies will rear up on their wood-putty legs and roam the land, looking for brides.

—Harper, in Tony Kushner, *Angels in America: Perestroika*

Throughout history, the expectation of an imminent end-time has captured the imagination of multitudes. As the year 2000 approaches, apocalyptic fear and fascination, millennial hope, and end-time angst are steadily increasing. From the rise of fundamentalism to the current marketing craze, bewildering blends of the millennial and the apocalyptic pervade American culture.

These ideologies enjoy center stage on

Broadway in the form of Tony Kushner's brilliant two-part play, *Angels in America*. *Angels in America* is a revelation in itself. As critic David Savran points out, "Not within memory has a new American play been canonized by the press as rapidly as *Angels in America*" (13). One possible reason behind Kushner's enviable success lies in his ability to take such a wide variety of explicitly American concerns and synthesize them, creating meaning from the morass. In this endeavor, apocalypticism acts as Kushner's framework. Kushner employs the apocalypse and the associations it engenders to present an agenda for change and a vision for the future.

A brief overview of the origins and evolution of religious and secular apocalyptic literature will provide a context for discussion of Kushner's work. The word "apocalyptic" originates from the Greek term for "revelation" (Schmithals 13). Its connection to religion can be traced back to the books of Daniel and Revelation. Both Daniel and John wrote in graphic and ambiguously metaphorical

style of the coming Judgment of the living and the dead (Class discussion).

The implications of these two texts are many and varied. Within the visions of Daniel and John are the ideas of a Chosen people who will be saved from God's wrath and the parallel notion that those left behind will suffer for their misdeeds. (Class discussion). Norman Cohn in his *The Pursuit of the Millennium* outlines the legacy of these biblical prophecies. Marginalized groups throughout the ages have taken the idea of a final reckoning, a celestially wreaked vengeance, as a balm for present persecution.

The accompanying, millennial image of Christ's peaceful reign on earth offers further solace in the face of unpleasant reality. Author Damian Thompson asserts that "this juxtaposition of terror and bliss is one of the most important features of apocalyptic belief" in that "the coexistence of visions of destruction and peace is a fundamental source of [the] instability" and "psychological turmoil associated with end-time" (58).

Even during periods of peace, the myth of the apocalypse lies just under the surface, engendering a desire in many to convert the disbelievers before the final Judgment Day. Later works, such as *Christ III* and *The Second Shepherds' Play*, are concerned more with the individual's behavior towards God than with the triumph or demonization of certain groups. *Christ III*, attributed to the Anglo-Saxon poet Cynewulf, speaks directly to the individual, illuminating in lurid detail the horrors that will befall the unrighteous on Judgment Day and presenting the apocalypse as a violently personal event. *Christ III* also specifies that the End can come at any moment, removing the signals that Revelation provided and advocating a daily recognition of imminent Judgement. Wakefield's *Second Shepherds' Play* is one of a series, a section of medieval cycle drama. Since most people were illiterate in the Middle Ages, these plays functioned

as the equivalent of formal religious instruction. To make the lessons more palatable and entertaining, secular stories were intertwined with scripture. Cycle drama proved to be the beginnings of secular end-time literature (Class discussion).

Modern drama still entertains and (if it is well done) teaches a lesson in the process. According to expert Michael D. Bristol, theater has always been not only "an art form. . . [but] also a social institution," "festive and political as well as literary—a privileged site for the celebration and critique of the needs and concerns of the polis" (1). Today, theater exists mostly as either mainstream, commercialized productions that adopt the beliefs of the audience or as experimental presentations that challenge societal norms and advocate change.

Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* manages to do both successfully. His flamboyant style and use of what he calls in his stage directions, "bits of wonderful, *theatrical* illusion" offer a presentation of apocalyptic end-time that both builds upon and parodies previous apocalyptic works (I: 5). From John of Patmos's seven-headed beast to Cynewulf's "flocks of radiant beings" to Wakefield's secular storyline, the historic patterns of portentous presentation coalesce in Prior's reaction to the Angel's visitation: "*Very Steven Spielberg*" (I: 118).

Although there are several visionary figures in the play, Prior is the main prophet. The story of his encounters with the Angelic Continental Principalities, his struggle to forget the lover who abandoned him, and his battle with AIDS comprise the main plot of the drama. The subplots concerning Roy Cohn's power politics and the failing Mormon marriage of Joe and Harper Pitt influence Prior's story. Woven throughout these plots and subplots is a feeling of impending doom and a countervailing hope for future bliss.

Kushner wrote *Angels in America* in the

mid-1980s, a decade of end-time anxiety characterized by the realization that human inventions can damage the planet, the advent of AIDS, Reagan's ultraconservative policy decisions, the threat of nuclear devastation, and the close of the Cold War. These supposed precursors of the apocalypse created a tension that Kushner makes manifest in the play. For instance, Harper worries about "global warming" and the dissipation of the ozone layer "Over Antarctica. Skin burns, birds go blind, icebergs melt. The world's coming to an end" (II: 16, I: 28). To borrow a term from critic Stanton Garner, Harper fears the very real, apocalyptic possibility of "ecocatastrophe" (177).

AIDS, still a mystery in the eighties, also resonates with apocalyptic associations. As with the epidemics of the Black Plague which, according to Cohn, were "interpreted [both] . . . as a divine chastisement for the transgressions of a sinful world" and as manifestations of the "'messianic woes' which were to usher in the Last Days" (131, 136), many fundamentalist Christians believed AIDS to be God's judgment on the wicked. As Patrick Buchanan, a religious and political conservative on Reagan's staff, once wrote: "The poor homosexuals. They have declared war on nature and now nature is exacting an awful retribution" (qtd. in Schaller 94).

The targeting of the homosexual population combined with the above mentioned concerns and the additional, long-standing marginalization of women, African-Americans, and religious minorities such as Mormons and Jews all contribute to and are emphasized by the unstable, apocalyptic atmosphere of *Angels in America*. It is an atmosphere ripe for revelation, for destruction and renewal, for a shift toward new paradigms. Kushner uses this sense of urgency to push his agenda of change. Harper's first lines in *Millennium Approaches* demonstrate Kushner's underlying emphasis on change: "Beautiful systems dying, old fixed orders spiraling

apart. . . ." (I: 16).

The specific "fixed orders" that Kushner attacks are the very American institutions of individualism and conservatism. Individualism and conservatism are conflated throughout the play. Kushner's antipathy towards both is apparent in his afterword to *Perestroika*, titled "With a Little Help From My Friends." In this short commentary Kushner states, "Americans pay high prices for maintaining the myth of the Individual" and then lists "the evils Individualism visits on our culture" (II: 149-50). Prominent in this list is the fact that "we elect presidents like Reagan" (II: 150).

Reagan, in his disinterested refusal to address the AIDS epidemic and the needs of America's minorities, represents ultraconservatism. In the play, Martin Heller, a man described by Roy Cohn as "he [who] sitteth on the right hand of the man who sitteth on the right hand of The Man," speaks of Reagan's administration as "a revolution. . . . It's really the end of Liberalism. . . . The end of ipso facto secular humanism. The dawning of a genuinely American political personality" (I: 63). Both the description of Heller and Heller's very rhetoric demonstrate Kushner's use of the trope of the apocalypse. Kushner adds emphasis to the horrific plight of the homosexual community by equating Reagan's choice of Supreme Court Justices with a true Doomsday for the gay community.

Roy Cohn, the vehemently Republican powerbroker (and closet-homosexual), functions within Kushner's apocalyptic framework as a personification of the Devil himself. Critic Ross Posnock labels Roy as a definite "satanic figure" (1), while James Miller describes Roy as "a monster dredged up from the darkest undercurrents of the American Dream" (65). Indeed, Roy represents a most horrific incarnation of extremist Right-wing views combined with uncaring, every-man-for-himself individualism. As Belize asserts in his description of Roy, these attitudes rep-

(II: 95).

Roy actually identifies himself as "the heart of modern conservatism" and adamantly refuses to acknowledge the connection between himself and the other homosexual characters in the play (II: 79). He tells Belize, "You. Me. (He snaps his fingers) No. Connection" (II: 88). Though in a position of power, Roy offers no aid to the homosexual community. When Belize asks for a few bottles out of Roy's AZT stash, Roy answers with an ultraconservative view: "I am not moved by an unequal distribution of goods on this earth" (II: 55). Roy reacts to Belize's resulting outrage by mocking, "Gimme! So goddamned entitled" (II: 56). Belize, whom expert Framji Minwalla identifies as "the rhetorical mouthpiece for Kushner's opinions," responds in a rather apocalyptic fashion to Roy's selfishness by stating with finality, "Everything I want is in the end of you" (II: 75).

This desire for a change in the status quo is challenged not only by the conservatism of Roy and Reagan, but also by the Angels themselves. Minwalla states, "His [Roy's] worldview converges with that of the Angels—resistant to change in the social order, adamantly sustaining [the] power structure. . . ." (115). Roy presages and later reiterates the Angel's message with his first sentence and his dying demand to "Hold" (I: 11, II: 114). The celestial version, which expert Steven Kruger describes as "the Angel's deeply conservative political project" (152), can be summed in the Angel of America's final statement: "STASIS! The END" (I: 46).

In his use of the Angels, Kushner continues his employment of apocalyptic associations. As Michael Grosso points out in *The Millennium Myth*, "Angels . . . are Biblical symbols of encroaching endtime," heralds of the coming Judgment Day (11). Kushner presents an interesting variation with his Angelic Continental Principalities—a world abandoned by God. When the Angel of America, in an action which James Miller terms "angelus ex

machina" (64), comes crashing through Prior's ceiling, she instructs, orders, and exhorts:

In creating You [humankind], Our Father-Lover unleashed Sleeping Creation's Potential for Change. . . He [God] began to leave Us! Bored with His Angels, Bewitched by Humanity, In Mortifying imitation of You, his least creation, He would sail off on Voyages. . . YOU HAVE DRIVEN HIM AWAY! YOU MUST STOP MOVING! . . . Turn Back. Undo. Till HE returns again. (II: 42-45)

This anti-progress sentiment confuses Prior for a time. The Angels obviously desire a return to and maintenance of the status quo. Because Prior is sick with AIDS, a type of "Virus of Time" in its fatal numbering of final days, the Angels perhaps believe he will share their desire to stop the movement of time and thus the progression of his disease (II: 42). Belize intuitively divines this trap and advises Prior, "This is just you, Prior, afraid of what's coming, afraid of time. But see that's just not how it goes, the world doesn't spin backwards. Listen to the world, to how fast it goes" (II: 47).

Hannah offers a similar opinion on the origin of angels and visions. In Hannah's definition, "An angel is just a belief, with wings and arms that can carry you. . . . If it lets you down, reject it. Seek for something new" (II: 103). Just as Kushner ultimately rejects the fundamentally conservative belief system that the Angels advocate, Prior refuses "the Tome of Immobility, of respite, of cessation" (II: 131). In forcing the Angels to take back the book of prophecy, Prior expresses the belief that "If I can find hope anywhere, that's it, that's the best I can do. . . . Bless me anyway. I want more life" (II: 133).

Kushner points to this decision, to Prior's choice "not just to survive but that he wants to survive," as a source of hope in the play (qtd. in Pacheco 56). Prior's decision, his affirmation of life even in the face of the Angel's threats concerning "What . . . the

grim Unfolding of these Latter Days [will] bring," constitutes a denial of both apocalyptic belief and of the earthly status-quo doctrine of conservatism. Prior's search for hope is reflected in the final paragraph of Kushner's afterword, where Kushner writes of his belief that "Amidst the gathering dark, paths of resistance, pockets of peace and places from whence hope may be plausibly expected" do exist (II: 155). Kushner also gives his formula for finding those escapes from apocalyptic doom: "Together we organize the world for ourselves... we reflect it, refract it, criticize it, grieve over its savagery and help each other to discern" those millennial periods of peace (II: 155, emphasis added).

This is the blessing of more life found within the experience of community. Kushner has termed *Angels in America* to be a study of "the extent of a community's embrace," and the ideal shows through in his epilogue (qtd. in Jones 21). In that final scene, set four years into the future, Prior, Hannah, Louis, and Belize struggle together towards communal healing as they sit around the Bethesda fountain and discuss the world:

Louis: Remember four years ago? The

whole time we were feeling everything everywhere was stuck, while in Russia! Look! Perestroika! The Thaw! It's the end of the Cold War!

The whole world is changing! (II: 143)

This depiction of millennial resolution is couched in political terms and offers a possible alternative to the conservative agenda of the Angels. Prior continues the political ramifications of the scene with his view of the "Capital M Millennium": "We will be citizens. The time has come" (II: 145, 146).

This vision, this healing benediction pronounced beside a statue of the angel of healing, Bethesda, represents a hopeful wish for true acceptance into the community. As Louis tells Belize, "It's not enough to be tolerated, because when the shit hits the fan you find out how much tolerance is worth. Noth-

ing. And underneath all the tolerance is intense, passionate, hatred" (I: 90). Acceptance, equality, community are the true hopes for the future.

These hopes are embodied in Belize's view of heaven. Belize pictures heaven as a place "Like San Francisco. . . . [with] Piles of trash. . . . And voting booths. . . . And everyone in Balenciaga gowns with red corsets, and big dance palaces full of music and lights and racial impurity and gender confusion" (II: 75-76). In Belize's heaven, everyone has equal citizenship. Voting booths are easily accessible and equally effective for all. Race and gender cease to be points of contention, and people celebrate together in harmony.

Race and gender cease to matter as Belize's vision encompasses a paradigm shift from the "Uni-genited" to androgyny, from ethnic boundaries to racial blurring (II: 41). These ideals exactly contradict the Angel's politically conservative injunction that "If you do not MINGLE you will Cease to Progress" (II: 45). In his denial of the Angel's desires, Belize's heaven connects the idea of "intermingl[ing]" and community spirit with positive progress (II: 42).

Belize's progressive vision of heaven presents an intriguing foil for the Angel's heavenly vision. When Prior visits heaven with the Angel of America, he describes heaven as a place that is "supposed to look like San Francisco" but that falls short of "the real San Francisco. . . [which] is unspeakably beautiful" (II: 120). In the stage directions, Kushner states that heaven should "look mostly like San Francisco after the Great 1906 Quake" and have a "deserted, derelict feel to it" (II: 118). According to Allen J. Frantzen, "Heaven commemorates disaster, despair, and stasis" (144).

The heaven which the Angels offer to Prior is a place representative of the emptiness of their conservative beliefs, empty of community and feeling, abandoned by God (Kushner leaves his audience to decide

whether the conservatism of the Angels and the emptiness of heaven resulted in or resulted from God's abandonment). Belize's vision of heaven reflects an ideal which Hannah articulates in the single word "Interconnectedness" (II: 144). The beginnings of Belize's ideal of interconnectedness are apparent in the group of characters gathered around the Bethesda fountain. These characters, as critic Carol Donley points out, "represent Jews and Christians and agnostics [and Mormons]; homosexuals and heterosexuals; blacks and whites; men and women; caregivers and patients; two generations—the American mix" (2).

The bond connecting these different individuals is blatantly apparent to Harper. In her communal dream scene with Prior, Harper perceives that deep within Prior "there's a part . . . the most inner part, entirely free of disease" (I: 34). She recognizes that an element of Prior has never been touched by the apocalyptic plague of AIDS or the twin evils of religious fundamentalism and political conservatism. Harper's vision represents a universal, transcendent connection between all people.

Harper has another vision which Stanton Garner describes as "universal in its inclusiveness" (182). Harper's concern for the ozone layer is finally alleviated as she flies toward San Francisco at the close of the play. She dreams she reaches the tropopause and sees:

Souls were rising, from the earth far below, souls of the dead, of people who had perished, from famine, from war, from the plague, and they floated up... and formed a web, a great net of souls, and the souls were . . . the stuff of ozone, and the outer rim absorbed them, and was repaired. (II: 141-142)

This vision of interconnectedness and communal healing is distinctly millennial in its imagery. Garner identifies and explicates the operation of "millenarian iconography, specifically that of the Rapture, with its souls called from their graves" in Harper's "vision of res-

urrection . . . healing and repair" (182).

Healing and community also come from forgiveness. When Roy, the enemy/Archfiend, finally dies, Belize prevails upon Louis (and Ethel) to perform the Kaddish for Roy. Belize convinces Louis with the lines: "A queen can forgive her vanquished foe. It isn't easy, it doesn't count if it's easy, it's the hardest thing. Forgiveness. Which is maybe where love and justice finally meet. Peace at last." (II: 122). Minwalla explains, "In this moment these three come together. . . . to mourn, forgive, attain resolution, relieve themselves of a moral burden, and to confront and embrace their other [Roy], thereby inventing a more . . . expansively conceived idea of community (110). From such sharing comes grace. Belize predicts this peace with his description of snow: "Soon, this . . . ruination will be blanketed white. You can smell it . . . Softness, compliance, forgiveness, grace" (I: 100).

Thus, Kushner's vision for the future is ultimately more humanistic than apocalyptic. As Prior decides, everyone should keep "a file on the hearts you break, that's all that counts in the end" (II: 89). The possibility of progress and the hope for change lie in this more human-focused ideology. Community and the sharing of experience represent heaven on earth for Kushner. He offers a vision of acceptance and equality for all marginalized people, in the process evoking a belief in the universal goodness of all humankind. In Kushner's world, an acknowledgment and celebration of interconnectedness is the recipe for recovery—both for human and global ills.

Kushner puts forth these ideas through his employment of the apocalyptic myth. The earth quakes, angels crash through ceilings, a plague kills thousands, and the Antichrist (in the form of Roy Cohn and/or Ronald Reagan) walks the earth. Kushner uses this framework, this background of

apocalyptic urgency to push his new paradigms, adding emphasis to the plight of homosexuals and AIDS victims through the resonance he creates between present dilemmas and past prophecies.

Even as Kushner exploits past prophecies, he critiques them. Like the Angel who must make a "Revision in the text" for Prior, the traditions of the apocalyptic prove malleable in Kushner's capable hands (II: 38). In the place of Daniel's Chosen people, Kushner offers the ideal of community. Instead of John's unforgiving stance, he points to forgiveness as a source of hope, renewal, and connection. Despite *Christ III's* emphasis on inescapable doom, Kushner offers a path towards peace. In the end, Kushner creates a re-visioning of the apocalyptic myth, replacing the fear of judgment and death with an affirmation of life.

Many critics discuss Kushner's view of progress by analyzing Walter Benjamin's Angel of History and the applications of Benjamin's philosophy on the play. See Savran pages 14-23 for an example.

Although this sentence does not represent a direct quote or a paraphrasing, the idea came from two different articles. James Miller talks of the "Virus of Time" as a plague on the Angels (65), while Allen Franzten suggests that AIDS is a disease likely to make a victim want to stop time (144).

In Tony Kushner, *Thinking*, pages 55-57, Kushner offers a despairing vision of what the future might hold if conservatism continues to reign unchecked. The horrors he delineates include the predictions that "minorities will have no legal protectional guarantees and will be ruthlessly dominated and policed by a pseudo-majority. . . . Sodomy laws will mushroom. . . there will of course be no federal funding for the arts or humanities. . . . Research on AIDS, research on breast cancer will have stalled" and so forth.

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